POCKET ESSENTIALS FILM

Tess

Cul-de-sac

Rosemary's Baby

Chinatown

The Fearless Vampire Killers

Daniel Bird

A Day At The Beach

What?

The Ninth Gate

The Pianist

Bitter Moon

Death And The Maiden

Pirates

Frantic

Macbeth

Knife In The Water

Roman Polanski

Daniel Bird

The Pocket Essential

ROMAN POLANSKI

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1: Introduction: Anatomy Of The Devil

"...and so, who are
you, after all?
- I am part of the power
which forever wills evil
And forever works good."

- *Faust*, Goethe

> "Where would your good be if there were no evil and what would the world look like without a shadow? Shadows are thrown by people and things. There's the shadow of my sword, for instance. But shadows are also cast by trees and living things. Do you want to strip the whole globe by removing every tree and every creature to satisfy your fantasy of a bare world?"
>
> - *The Master And Margarita*, Mikhail Bulgakov

Roman Polanski was born in Paris but spent most of his youth in Cracow, Poland, during the 1940s. Around the same time, across the border in Stalinist Russia, a Devil was being committed to print. A dying Mikhail Bulgakov was putting the final touches to a literary bombshell, *The Master And Margarita*. Flash forward almost half a century later. During the last days of the Eastern Block, Polanski – by now having firmly established himself as a major film-maker of international standing – is putting the final touches to his most ambitious project, a film adaptation of *The Master And Margarita*.

It was not the first time Polanski had filmed the Devil, nor would it be the last. In 1968 Polanski adapted Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* for the screen, whilst his most recent film was based on Arturo Pérez-Reverte's labyrinthine novel *Il Club Dumas* (filmed as *The Ninth Gate*, 1999). 1989 marked the fall of the Berlin Wall. Communism was now officially dead and the ghost of Stalin (integral to Bulgakov's novel) was fading. Ironically, Polanski's financiers, Warner Brothers, dropped *The Master And Margarita* for a more prosaic reason. Money.

Nonetheless, Polanski described *The Master And Margarita* script, which he wrote alone, as the best adaptation he had ever done, something all the more remarkable given the novel's 'unfilmable' reputation. As Joseph Strick's *Ulysses* (1967, after James Joyce), Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Sheltering Sky* (1990 after Paul Bowles), David Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* (1992, after William Burroughs), *Crash* (1996, after J G Ballard) and Raul Ruiz's *Time Regained* (1999 after Marcel Proust) show, a book with an unfilmable reputation never stops film-makers from trying.

However, no matter how daunting the project may have appeared, it is easy to see what attracted Polanski to *The Master And Margarita*. Bulgakov's novel epitomises Polanski's major concern, the mechanisms and confrontation of evil.

To say that Polanski is no stranger to evil would be an understatement. His generation of Poles endured the holocaust only to find themselves 'freed' under the ever-watchful eye of another totalitarian regime, though one belonging to the other extreme of the political spectrum. When the Manson family murdered Polanski's second wife, Sharon Tate, in 1969, many commentators implied that what "goes around comes around" – that Polanski, a film-maker who fantasised about sex and violence, had finally paid the price.

It's easy to play Cassandra with the benefit of hindsight (and many of Polanski's commentators do) but it is difficult to make a distinction between life and art. However, by constantly using events from his own life as raw material for genre or at any case distinctly non-autobiographical films, Polanski has made such a distinction even more difficult to make. Usually life can never match the form or the symmetry of art, but Polanski has gone out of his way to bind up his films with elements from his very public personal life. Polanski claims in *Roman By Polanski*, his autobiography, that for him the line between reality and fantasy has always been blurred. Indeed, one cannot watch *Macbeth* (1971) without being goaded by parallels with the Manson murders, nor can one watch the violent seduction of *Tess* (1979) without being struck by the irony of it being a film directed by someone fleeing charges for raping a minor in a foreign country. The more pressing issue is whether or not Polanski's films hold up without the ironic *frisson* generated by knowledge of the director's off-screen life? Or rather, how much weight

do the horrific (and reckless) events in Polanski's life impinge on the nature of his films? Sainte-Beuve and Proust quarrelled over the question whether appreciation of a novel is deepened by knowledge of its author's life. Sainte-Beuve said "Yes." Proust, however, said "No" on the grounds that an author's work comes from a place too deep even for self-knowledge – 'le moi profond'. The anecdote is not a moral, just a warning: Polanski's films are open to *auteur* interpretations that reduce every one of his films to aspects of a single psychodrama, just as one can throw away the peach and noisily suck the stone.

Polanski, like another Hollywood exile, Stanley Kubrick, has developed a body of work dedicated to charting the mechanics of evil. Contrary to the judgements of a large faction of critics, Polanski is not amoral. His work reflects a Western world in which the black and white moral landscape painted by once-oppressive Judeo-Christian religions is dissolving, whether we like it or not, into ever finer shades of grey. Above all else, Polanski's films depict a Godless world in which the good do not always triumph, the outsider is always persecuted and the innocent is always abused.

Evil

In her excellent biography of Polanski, Barbara Leaming suggests that his work lacks a "moral tone" and that his films are "amoral." However, a distinction needs to be drawn between a moral film-maker and one who moralises. *Chinatown* (1974) ends with the abused Evelyn being shot and her evil, incestuous father, Noah Cross, gaining custody of his daughter. The protagonist, detective Jake Gittes, handcuffed to a member of the Police force that once employed him, is left as an impotent bystander to the spectacle. His plan for Evelyn and her daughter to esc ape to Mexico has gone badly wrong. However, it's absurd to think that Polanski condones Cross' actions and condemns Evelyn. Though Polanski doesn't moralise, his films are, nonetheless, moral. It's just that Polanski's vision – here expressed via the fate of Jake Gittes – is frankly pessimistic. Just as Czeslaw Milosz wrote of the Holocaust poet Tadeusz Borowski in *The Captive Mind*, if Polanski comes across as a nihilist in his stories, then his nihilism is the result of an ethical passion, from a disappointed love of the world and of humanity.

The sense of despair in which *Chinatown* climaxes is typical of Polanski's films, although unusually political. Polanski more commonly expresses despair in everyday situations, as in *The Tenant* (*Le Loctaire*, 1976), *Tess* or *Frantic* (1987). However, sexual despair dominates Polanski's sharpest films including his debut *Knife In The Water* (1962), *Repulsion* (1964), *Cul-De-Sac* (1965) and *Bitter Moon* (1992). Whatever the form, despair in Polanski's films stems from a broadly existential moral aspect which, conversely, depicts an absurd, meaningless world. Polanski's characters behave in a perverse, though nonetheless truthful manner, for their actions are often self-serving (specifically in terms of sexual and material greed, both of which Polanski equates with power) and don't necessarily tend towards good. Polanski knows only too well that such good intentions last only so long as civilisation lasts. Polanski's films end on the brink of the collapse of civilisation or the eve of a new tyranny, either satanic (*Rosemary's Baby*, *The Ninth Gate*), political (*Macbeth*, *Chinatown*) or even one ruled by vampires (*The Fearless Vampire Killers*, 1967).

Chinatown ends with the implicit idea that atheistic doubt, or at least the feeling that we no longer live in fear of being judged, does not license amorality. Just as Bulgakov reiterated Goethe's ethics, Polanski's films present goodness and evil existing in equal measures. Polanski's vision is unacceptable from a Christian standpoint because, for Polanski, evil cannot be reduced to the flesh. It is a social phenomenon: a fundamentalist religion, like totalitarian rule, is merely another force organised around engulfing/crushing non-conformists, though one which proceeds through the labelling of people and things as evil. Christianity arrived in Poland in 966. Caught between Rome and Byzantium, the conversion to Christianity of Polish pagan tribes was a political manoeuvre to consolidate the fledgling state and curb the Eastward expansion of the German Roman Empire. By operating on the edges of Rome, Polish Catholicism developed in a highly conservative, not to mention combative spirit. Anything that threatened the Catholic State acquired a demonic profile.

The Devil's Polish reputation developed in the rich, ethnically diverse folklore that comprised Polish culture at that time: Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian. According to Wiesiek Powaga, native Polish folklore brimmed with pagan devils and demons. The *upiór* (a bodi-

less spirit, now associated with vampires) took on all forms, like *strzygi*, bloodsucking owls, or *zmory*, creatures that suffocated their victims.

Mythologies owe their system entirely to the inquisitors. Just as witches developed their demonic mythology out of what Trevor Roper describes as "peasant credulity and feminine hysteria," the Nazis assembled their own systematic mythology of ritual murder out of prejudice and scandal and propagated a global conspiracy against Judaism. The Nazi occupation of Poland was replaced by another tyranny, however, the Neo-Stalinist mythology of applied dialectical materialism was no less systematic. Witchcraft and vampirism were, like religions of any sort, excluded from Soviet ideology, thus prompting Bulgakov's recourse to the fantastic on the one hand and the banning of Constanin Erchov and Gueorgui Kropatchev's adaptation of Gogol's witch story, *Viy* (1967), on the other. Even in the United States Polanski was 'officially' condemned by the US Roman Catholic Office before being scrutinised for his very public lifestyle. In art and life, Polanski is an outsider, so what better figure to identify with than the Devil?

Painting Birds

If Polanski's films explore the disparity between moral behaviour and what is perceived as evil, then they find an analogue in the novels of the Polish writer Jerzy Kosinski. The paths of Polanski and Kosinski crossed many times until Kosinski's suicide in 1992. Both share many characteristics, not to mention obsessions. At one point Polanski was scheduled to direct a film adaptation of Kosinski's novel *Being There* (later successfully filmed with Peter Sellers in the lead role). However, whereas Polanski dispensed with any of the responsibilities associated with highbrow artists, Kosinski retained his credentials as a social scientist and often overextended himself as a social critic.

Kosinski met with fame upon the publication of his first novel, *The Painted Bird*. It was often rumoured that Kosinski had, in fact, based the story upon Polanski's childhood. However, the origins and intentions of Kosinski's novel are in need of some clarification. Kosinski had first met Polanski in Lodz during his film school years. As Kosinski's biographer James Park Sloan argues, it's more likely that Kosinski drew his inspiration from Unuk and Rodmska-Strzemecka's *Polish Children*

Accuse, a collection of testimony by children who had wandered and suffered during the occupation.

Implicit in Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* is the humanist idea of the scapegoat's role in the functioning of society. Society fears the outsider and tries to destroy him. Paradoxically, society needs the outsider and, if necessary, creates one so that by labelling him as evil it can confirm itself as good. Kosinski's story hinges around a violent incident involving the painted bird of the title. The boy's sexually frustrated mentor grabs hold of a strong bird, paints its wings in bright colours and takes it into the forest. The bird's twittering attracts a flock of the same species. They release the bird, which then flies up into the sky amongst its flock. The flock inspects the painted bird before attacking it.

Kosinski's novel is very much a product of the Sixties: the idea of the outsider is a violent expression of lingering existential concerns revitalised from a social humanist perspective. The notion of the 'other' – the outsider – resonated in the writings of renegade psychiatrist, R D Laing, author of *The Divided Self*, whilst the Hungarian psychiatrist Thomas Szasz, writing in *The Manufacture Of Madness*, likened the painting of the bird's wings to how "psychiatrists discolour their patients, and society as a whole taints its citizens."

Polanski, of course, has repeatedly identified with the 'outsider'. Polanski has often cited Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out* (1947) as the film that probably had the most influence on his youth. As Polanski wrote in an issue of *Positif*, Reed's film is about a fugitive: "during the war I was a fugitive from the ghetto. Twenty years later, in London, I was a fugitive from Stalinism. And today I am still a fugitive!" However, the 'other' takes many forms and roles in Polanski's films. For example, persecuted heroines like Carol in *Repulsion*, Rosemary or Simone Choule/Trelkovski in *The Tenant*, or a misanthropic idealist like George in *Cul-De-Sac*. If these characters are burdened with madness, paranoia or extreme cynicism, Polanski's most accessible films, such as *Rosemary's Baby* or *Frantic*, operate by switching the tables on the viewer, having an average protagonist succumb to an insane, cynical world where paranoia becomes a distinct advantage. Being labelled paranoid doesn't mean that people aren't out to get you; rather, as Kubrick said, to be paranoid is to be in possession of all the facts. However, as the protagonists of *Rosemary's Baby*, *Chinatown*, *The Tenant* and *Frantic*

would testify, to possess the facts, whether through detection or obsession, is to confront a distinctly grimmer world than the one in which they started.

Concentration

The 'outsiders' in Nazi Occupied Poland or Stalinist Russia found themselves in a "concentration universe," to use Czeslaw Milosz's chillingly apt phrase. It's a term that has particular resonance in the films of Walerian Borowczyk, particularly *Angels' Games* (*Les jeux des anges*, 1964) and *Goto, Island Of Love* (*Goto, l'île d'ámour*, 1968). However, concentration can also occur through less dramatically sinister means. In films as diverse as *Nashville* (1975), *Prêt-À-Porter* (1996) and *Gosford Park* (2001), Robert Altman consistently uses location or an event to precipitate drama. For *Psycho* (1960), Hitchcock used the Bates Motel as a crucible of a sick consciousness. This "terrible building," as Robin Wood put it, would become a crucial device of Seventies horror films, most notably in Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974). "Claustrophobia" is the adjective usually applied to Polanski's films. In *Knife In The Water*, three disparate characters find their nerves shredded on a yacht whilst profoundly oppressive apartments contain *Repulsion*, *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Tenant*. These locations may be urban, but they could easily be an island, as in *Cul-De-Sac*, or a foreign country, as in *What?* (1972) or *Death And The Maiden* (1994).

Concentrating the drama reveals an absence of selflessness amongst the incarcerated characters. People are reduced to animals with a desire to live. Yes, Polanski's films are cynical, but let's not forget that the 'cynic' refers literally to what is 'dog like'. As a cynic, Polanski's choice to 'play the dog' creates havoc for any moral discourse, since humans are traditionally defined by their place in both nature and civil hierarchies. When civil hierarchies collapse, as in the concentration camps that underpin totalitarian rule – but also Macbeth's castle, Chinatown and the seedy district depicted in *The Tenant* – cynicism re-evaluates man' s place in nature and society. The idea finds its most explicit expression in Ben Kingsley's climactic confession in Polanski's film of Ariel Dorfman's play, *Death And The Maiden*. Sigourney Weaver plays a victim of the state torture in a South American dictatorship. She later

conducts a violent and humiliating mock trial of her abuser. Though *Death And The Maiden* never quite rids itself of its stage origins, the actions of Paulina, like Carol in *Repulsion* and Trelkovski in *The Tenant*, illustrate the single ethic by which the persecuted outsider lives: it's permissible to harm others, provided they harm you first. Beyond this, everyone saves himself the best they can. However, as Wladyslaw Szpilman's *The Pianist* (the subject of Polanski's most recent film scheduled for release in 2002) goes to show, just as many educated, respectable middle-class people behave in a weak manner in the concentration camp scenario. In fact, the so-called crooks and rogues were often brave and the most helpful.

Broadly Darwinian in his survival of the fittest mentality, Polanski's predisposition for the absurdity of these situations springs from a feeling of the pervasiveness of violence and a Germanic (Schopenhauerian/Nietzschean) pessimism. To man, the herd animal, as to his non-human ancestors, safety lies in similarity. That is why conformity (biological and social) is good and deviance is evil.

The Left of the West

Though Polanski is most famous for the films he has made in the West since the 1960s, he had already established himself as a major film-maker in Central Europe prior to his departure. If Polanski had turned to the commercial market place of the West for greater artistic freedom, during the Sixties the critical community in France, especially *Cahiers du Cinéma*, found itself looking towards the East for political inspiration. Therefore, Polanski's early films, especially *The Fat And The Lean*, were subject to an often muddled, left-leaning trend in evaluating Iron Curtain cinema from the comfort of the West.

The debate concerned 'progressive' versus 'reactionary' and the merits of 'realism' versus 'non-realism'. Both forms proved to be radical and controversial within the existing production context. For example, it wasn't 'new wave' style techniques that worried the Polish authorities in the case of *Knife In The Water* but its decidedly non-communist message expressed within a realist format, similar to Jarmoil Jires' *The Joke* (Czechoslovakia, 1967), Milos Forman's *The Fireman's Ball* (*Hori, ma Panenko*, Czechoslovakia, 1967) and Jiri Menzel's *Larks On A String* (*Skrivanci na niti*, Czechoslovakia, 1969). Con-

versely, the 'non-realism' of the fantasy structures of Polanski's early short films, such as *Two Men And A Wardrobe* and *Where Angels Fall*, contains no social concern whatsoever. In the case of Vera Chytilova's wonderful *Daisies* (Czechoslovakia, 1966) and Dusan Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries Of The Organism* (Yugoslavia, 1970), their formal experimentation was condemned as elitist and, ironically, valued only in the West. Interestingly, as Milos Foreman pointed out, not one of the communist countries could financially sustain the number of films produced annually during the Sixties and the high output of aggressively artistic films was solely a response to demand from Western markets.

Not surprisingly, there have been frictions between Polanski and the left-wing community of critics and film-makers in France. During the darkest days of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, politics sullied film criticism to the point of absurdity. The nadir surely being Luc Moullet's dismissal of Jan Nemec's harrowing *Diamonds Of The Night* (*Demanty noci*, 1964) on the ludicrous grounds that it had 'reactionary' aesthetics and was generally "deprived of all social and human value." However, Polanski's finest moment came at the 1968 Cannes Film Festival with *Rosemary's Baby* when he pulled up on the Croisette in a flamboyant sports car only to learn of the outbreak of the infamous May riots. Truffaut and Godard, the latter now well into his Maoist phase, attempted to close the festival. However, Polanski violently protested and publicly condemned Truffaut and Godard as a bunch of so-called new wave directors "playing at being revolutionaries." There was a row and Godard told Polanski to "fuck off back to Hollywood."

Like Milos Forman and Jan Nemec – both in attendance at the festival – Polanski had first-hand experience of living in countries where a Communist philosophy had been gradually displaced by totalitarian rule. Speaking in a recent *Guardian* interview of his own confrontation with student radicalism in Berkeley during the late Sixties, Czeslaw Milosz expressed his sadness to see that every stupidity he had experienced in Poland was being recreated in the West. Andrzej Zulawski's *Diabel* (*The Devil*, 1971) painted a very different picture of the student riots in Poland in 1968: "part of the Communist establishment wanted to seize power. In order to do this they devised a very clear trick. They provoked youth – innocent, naïve university youth especially – to start a series of protests on the streets against censorship, lack of freedom.

They did it on purpose. Then the Communists turned to the Russians, the landlords, saying ‘ this government in Poland cannot control the population. So you have to fire them and take us because we know how to deal with them.’ To show this – because they were from the police, what you’d call KGB Polish branch – they organised a savage repression of the Polish young people in March 1968. And in May 1968 in France, to this day they talk of their French revolution; they burned a car – one.”

Polanski must have had the last laugh when Jean-Luc hilarity reached new heights with a ridiculous rosy postcard of post-invasion Czechoslovakia, *Pravda* (1969).

Sexual Violence

Towards the end of Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s *Journey To The End Of The Night* (*Voyage au bout de la nuit*, 1932), the narrator, Ferdinand Bardamu, asserts that his “friendly feelings” towards his friend/doppelganger Robinson and his fiancée have taken an insidiously erotic turn: “Betrayal”. The erotic aspect of Polanski’s best work, *Knife In The Water*, *Cul-De-Sac*, *Rosemary’s Baby*, is always a function of betrayal. Betrayal or the need to betray is thrown up by the sexual tension that is the result of the incongruity of this existence with idealistic conceptions (Christian or communist) of social contract, transactions amongst equals and mutual benefit. As Raymond Durgnat points out in relation to Polanski’s films, if sexuality was the Victorian obscenity then violence is ours.

If the totalitarian oppression of Poland – from both the East and West – operated through violence and the threat of violence, then it also engendered a deep cultural preoccupation with the act of surrender. Andrzej Zulawski’s *Third Part Of The Night* (*Trzecia czesc nocy*, 1970), for example, makes surrender mystical whilst Polanski, like Witold Gombrowicz (*The Marriage*, *Pornography*) and Bruno Schulz (*The Book Of Idolatry*), renders it erotic. From the absurd slapstick of *The Fat And The Lean* and *Mammals*, through the acute observation of *Knife In The Water* and *Cul-De-Sac*, to the blatant vulgarity of *What?* and *Bitter Moon*, victim and victimiser exist in reciprocal affairs of ascensions and submissions.

The violence of *Knife In The Water* is an expression of sexual jealousy, violence in *Repulsion* is the climax of Carol's sexual disgust. George and Oscar are sexually humiliated through a succession of stylised violent acts in *Cul-De-Sac* and *Bitter Moon* respectively, despite playing fantasy roles of being the victimiser. It's no cliché to talk of rape as an act less about sex than power. But in Polanski's films, especially *Tess*, sexual relationships are only about power, no matter how loving. Violent seduction is the norm in even his most whimsical films such as *The Fearless Vampire Killers* or *Pirates*. With *Bitter Moon*, Polanski pushed the sexual power play into a new contorted form that precariously balanced on the edge of self-parody. The result was unashamedly voyeuristic, more than a little mischievous and very funny. By contrast, thanks to Ariel Dorfman's stage play origins, *Death And The Maiden* offered a smartened-up, politically correct chamber piece about revenge. *Death And The Maiden* is both more liberal in tone and lacking any sense of humour, for it is about 'serious' issues in world affairs. The result, however, is at best too simplistic, at worst a little po-faced, and ultimately unconvincing. However, the blame lies solely with Dorfman; Polanski no doubt took on the project as a jobbing director happy with the opportunity to work with both Sigourney Weaver and Ben Kingsley. Left to his own devices, if Polanski were to deal with the same source material, I'd hazard a guess that the result would move perilously close to Liliana Caviani's *Night Porter* (1974).

Voyeurism

Polanski's obsession with watching violence is evident in his first short film, *Murder*. Polanski's eye on violence is unflinching. Paradoxically, an unflinching camera isn't necessarily the most revealing. Polanski's glory lies in what he doesn't show; he's a master manipulator of the mind's eye. The grotesque shock in Polanski's early short film *Smile* is that a voyeur expects to see a young woman in a bathroom, though he's actually confronted with an old man. In Polanski's most famous film, Rosemary's baby is conspicuous by its very absence. Through a brief superimposition of a cat's eyes which Rosemary had dreamed of earlier, the viewer thinks it has seen the baby's demonic eyes. Though it turned out to be an unrealised project, Polanski had conceived two short films for Kenneth Tynan's erotic revue *Oh! Calcutta!* These films per-

fectly illustrated his voyeuristic strategy. Both shorts were static single takes. In one, a girl would appear and strip naked, although her breasts and crotch would be obscured by furniture. Another girl would enter, strip, and the two girls would make love, reaching orgasm for reasons the viewer could only dream about. The other short involved another sexual scenario, but a window frame was to be used as a similar editing device.

Like Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960), a favourite film of Polanski's, *Repulsion* opens with a close-up of an eyeball. The credits cut horizontally across this image, recalling the infamous eyeball slicing scene in Buñuel's *Un chien andalou* (1929). Ironically, when Catherine Deneuve went on to star in Buñuel's *Belle de jour* (1967), the famous scene in which she spies through a peephole in the wall of a brothel was more typical of Polanski than Buñuel. Polanski himself plays the voyeur in *The Fearless Vampire Killers*. His character, Alfred, is equally delighted to see Sarah bathing herself and being spanked by her father. The most disturbing case of voyeurism in Polanski's filmography occurs in *The Tenant*. Polanski plays Trelkovski, whose recently acquired apartment has a clear view into the toilet across the courtyard. Believing h e has seen the dead former tenant unbandage herself in the toilet, Trelkovski ventures across the hallway. Staring back out of the toilet to his own apartment window, he finds himself staring back.

A Dionysic Uprising

Walerian Borowczyk's short animated film *Renaissance* (1962) reveals a decimated room gradually reconstructing itself, as if time were going backwards. The final object to materialise is a hand-grenade which then explodes, destroying the room. Renaissance works through an antagonism: order against disorder. This Nietszchean tension haunts Polanski's cinema too, though here the entropy is inverted, in Dionysus' favour. Social and moral order gives way to violent insatiable erotic frenzy through the dream of a more orgiastic world composed of vampires, Satanists and crooks, in *The Fearless Vampire Killers*, *Rosemary's Baby* and *Chinatown* respectively. Even psychological order is brought tumbling down in *Repulsion* and *The Tenant*. Rosemary may dream nostalgically of the Sistine Chapel, but her real fantasy is of the decadent life of the millionaire on the Kennedy yacht. Maybe Rose-

mary's social repulsion is the result of a tension between her own desires for a more orgiastic, materialist life and a heightened awareness of its immorality. In speaking o f the 'other' and of violence and voyeurism, it may no longer be necessary to resort to the devil in order to speak of their sexual aspects (as Todorov argues in *Structural Approach To The Fantastic*) but it's nonetheless effective in the films of Roman Polanski.

2: Sex, Violence And Surrealism (1957-1962)

Roman Polanski was born in Paris on August 18, 1933. He was the only son of Ryszard Polanski and Bula Katz. Ryszard had been living in Paris for several years, working for a record company. A native of Cracow, Ryszard discarded his original family name, Liebling, as well as his first wife whom he had divorced in Poland. In France Ryszard fell in love with the Russian Katz. Katz was married and she also had a child, though she divorce d and married Ryszard. Ryszard, Bula and Roman lived at 5 rue St. Hubert in the 11th arrondissement, near the Père Lachaise cemetery.

In 1936, the family moved to Cracow. On September 1, 1939, the Nazis invaded Poland. Only five days later Cracow was taken. Five years later only 50,000 of 3,350,000 Polish Jews remained in Poland. Four million people, including Katz, died at Auschwitz alone. Having watched his mother being rounded up by the Nazis, and separated from his father, Roman fled into the ghetto. Roman's small build made him ideal for smuggling food and medical supplies in and out of the ghetto. Three years later Ryszard was caught. A Catholic family hid Roman, a crime that the Nazis punished by death. Later, under the name Romek Wilk (Wolf), Roman stayed with another Catholic family in the Polish countryside until his return in 1945.

Reunited with his father after the war, Roman couldn't play the role of the obedient son. Ryszard remarried again in 1947. His new wife, Wanda Zajaczkowska, loathed Roman and gave Ryszard an ultimatum: either Roman went or she would. Ryszard opted for the former and placed Roman in a boarding house.

Roman began acting in the theatre. His first major part was in the Russian play, *Son Of The Regiment*. In 1949, he played a street urchin in *Circus Tarabumba* at the Cracow Puppet Theatre. In 1950, Roman abandoned his technical studies – against his father's will – and entered the Cracow art school where he studied painting, sculpture and graphics. After his studies, Roman resumed his acting, appearing in *Three Stories* (a compilation film made by a group of students at the Lodz State Film School), *The Magic Bicycle* (Silik Sternfeld), *End Of Night* (Julian Dziedzina), *Sunken Ships* (Ewa and Czeslaw Petelski), *Phone My Wife* (Jaroslav Mach), *See You Tomorrow* (Janusz Morgenstern) and

Beware Of The Yeti (Andrzej Czekalski). However, Polanski's crucial break came when he played 'Mundek' in Andrzej Wajda's seminal *A Generation* (*Pokolenie*, 1954). Wajda played a major role in shaping Polanski's ideas about film and film-making.

A Generation and Andrzej Wajda

Andrzej Wajda (born in Suwalki, 1926) was the son of a cavalry officer killed in the Second World War. He fought in the Resistance from the age of sixteen. After the war he briefly studied painting at Cracow alongside Walerian Borowczyk before studying film direction at Lodz. Wajda's first film, *A Generation* – referring to Wajda's own, the 'lost generation' – was the first part of the War Trilogy: the second part, *Canal* (*Kanal*), arguably Wajda's best film, followed in 1957, and the Trilogy was completed in 1958 with *Ashes And Diamonds* (*Poiol i diament*).

A Generation and Andrzej Wajda are significant for several reasons. First, *A Generation* marked the beginning of the Polish School of the Fifties which included films by Andrzej Munk, Jerzy Kawalerowicz and others that were formally influenced by De Sica and Rosellini's Neo-Realism and thematically preoccupied with the Second World War Polish Experience. Secondly, Andrzej Wajda was instrumental in forwarding the acting career of the "Polish James Dean" Zbigniew Cybulski, who made his debut in *A Generation* in the role of Kostek, as well as the directing careers of Polanski, Jerzy Skolimowski (born in Lodz, 1936) and Andrzej Zulawski (born in Lwow, 1940).

Besides *Lotna*, Polanski acted in Wajda's *Innocent Sorcerers* (*Niewinni Czarodzieje*, 1960) and *Samson* (1961). Skolimowski was a young poet when Wajda asked him to collaborate on the screenplay and act in *Innocent Sorcerers*. Zulawski served as Wajda's assistant on an episode of the portmanteau film *Love At Twenty* (*Milosc Dwudziestolatkow*, 1962) and *Samson* and *Ashes* (*Popioly*, 1965). Both Zulawski's *The Third Part Of The Night* (1971) and *Possession* (1981) end with an homage to the jaw-dropping staircase set piece that ends *A Generation*.

In his autobiography, *Roman By Polanski*, Polanski recalls how *A Generation* suffered badly from pre-release problems: "Some scenes had to be re-shot to reinforce their ideological content; others, including a spectacular fight scene between Cybulski and me, were cut altogether.

The *Generation* ultimately shown and admired around the world was a pale shadow of Wajda's original version." *A Generation* does suffer from oversimplistic idealism and a harsh polarisation of nationalist villains and communist heroes, though this is more a reflection of restrictions imposed on pre-Gomulka Polish cinema, than of Wajda's artistic shortcomings.

The Lodz Film School (Panstwowa Wyzaza Szkola Teatraina Filmowa)

Polanski was accepted on the directing course at Lodz upon Wajda's recommendation. Between 1957 and 1959 Polanski completed six short films during his studies.

The Bicycle/Rower - Incomplete (1956)

Cast Roman Polanski, Adam Fiut.

Crew Cinematography: Nikola Todorow.

According to Polanski, a Bulgarian student, Nikola Todorow, had been assigned to make an exercise film in colour. Polanski persuaded Todorow and his teachers to turn the footage into a dramatic short. Polanski and Todorow travelled to Cracow to make a film based on an episode from his childhood. After the War Polanski bought and sold bicycles and spare parts. On one occasion, he was duped during one prospective purchase and a thug bludgeoned his head with a rock and stole his money.

Polanski produced, directed and acted in the short, as well as serving as "wardrobe mistress, continuity girl, and make-up man." His stepmother's nail polish stood in for blood. According to Polanski, half of the raw footage was lost in a processing mix-up at Film Polski and he reluctantly abandoned the film.

Murder/*Morderstwo* (1957)

Crew Cinematography: Nikola Todorow. 1½ mins. approx.

Story Total darkness. A door opens. The light reveals a man asleep. Another man enters, visible only from the waist down, carrying a pocket knife. Opening the knife, he stabs the sleeping man before leaving.

Verdict As a State Film School short, *Murder* stands out as lacking any social consideration, revelling in private fantasy, the ultimate crime in a Communist state. Probably the most memorable aspect of the film is just how discreet it is. There is little editing, let alone any moral. *Murder* simply introduces themes that would obsess Polanski for the next forty years: voyeurism and violence.

Teeth Smile/*Usmiech zebiczny* (1957)

Cast Nikola Todorow.

Crew Cinematography: Henryk Kucharski. 2 mins. approx.

According to Polanski, *Teeth Smile* was an exercise set by his supervisor. It shows a voyeur, played by Nikola Todorow, peering lecherously through a bathroom window at a naked girl drying herself. Nearly caught in the act, he retreats. He goes back for a second look, only to find an ugly old man brushing his teeth. The old man sees the voyeur in the bathroom mirror and turns to give him a toothy smile.

Break Up The Dance/*Rozbijemy Zabawe* (1958)

Crew Cinematography: Andrzej Galinski, Marek Nowicki. Music: Krzysztof Komeda. 9 mins.

Apparently Polanski arranged to film the annual student dance at Lodz. Having done that, he then coerced a group of thugs to ‘break up the dance’. As planned, the thugs arrived and proceeded to beat up the unsuspecting students. According to Thomas Kiernan’s (admittedly unreliable) *The Roman Polanski Story*, Polanski was imitating the documentary style of his Lodz mentor, Andrzej Munk. More of an anecdote than a success.

Two Men And A Wardrobe/Dwaj ludzie z szafa (1958)

Cast Jakub Goldberg, Henryk Kluba, Roman Polanski.

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Roman Polanski; Cinematography: Maciej Kijowski; Music: Krzysztof Komeda. Production: Polish Film Academy (PWSF) (Lodz). 15 mins.

Story Two men, one short the other tall, bearded and balding, lug a decorative wardrobe out of the sea. They stagger across a deserted beach into town to offer the wardrobe to various people. A girl isn't interested in their offering, and what's more they aren't allowed onto the tram with it. They are heckled out of a café with the wardrobe. However, the wardrobe is put to good use when they use it as a table for lunch. The pair pass an empty pavilion. A group of thugs are about to molest the girl, but she sees their reflection in the mirror and moves on. The thugs attack the two men instead and smash up the wardrobe. The group then stones a kitten to death. With the wardrobe between their legs, the two retrace their steps through the town back to the beach, carefully avoiding a field of sandcastles, before disappearing back into the sea.

Origins The actual premise of *Two Men And A Wardrobe* is borrowed from Stefan and Franciszka Themerson's comparatively obscure avant-garde *The Adventures Of A Good Citizen* (*Przygoda Czlowieka Poczciwego*, 1937). Sadly, only two 16mm copies of *The Adventures Of A Good Citizen* exist, one in London, the other in Warsaw.

Surreal Violence Two Men And A Wardrobe – the title itself evokes surrealist wordplay. It is overtly pre-occupied with violence, though on a number of levels. Most prominent is Polanski himself who plays the thug who attacks one of the two men. Then there is the stoning of the kitten. Above all, *Two Men And A Wardrobe* is about violent juxtapositions – *Two Men And A Wardrobe* in the sea, on the beach, in a café, etc. A fish in the sky – actually lunch laid out on the wardrobe mirror. By playing the thug, Polanski identifies with the victimiser rather than the victim of violence in a world that refuses to make such a distinction.

Avant-Garde Success Polanski conceived *Two Men And A Wardrobe* as an entry for the 1958 Brussels Experimental Film Festival. The Belgium manufacturer of film stock, Gevaert offered $10,000 for the first prize, and $5,000 for the second. Out of the 400 submissions, 133 were

selected. *Two Men And A Wardrobe* placed third and was awarded a bronze medal. Another Polish entry, *Dom* (House), the third and final collaboration between two brilliant poster artists, Walerian Borowczyk and Jan Lenica (see below), won first prize. Amongst the other entries were Stan Brakhage's *Loving* and Agnes Varda's *L'Opèra Mouffe*.

The Verdict Two Men And A Wardrobe is a deeply pessimistic parable: two men find themselves in absurd circumstances and fail to find a place in a corrupt, violent and cruel world. Polanski's treatment is, however, hilarious. 4/5

Krzysztof Komeda

From *Two Men And A Wardrobe* through to *Rosemary's Baby*, all but one of Polanski's films feature remarkable jazz soundtracks by Krzysztof Komeda. Komeda's scores are 'cool' both in timing and execution. His untimely death in 1969 earned Komeda the reputation as the "Lost Leader of Polish jazz." Komeda was born Krzysztof Trczinski-Komeda in Poznan and trained as an ear, nose and throat specialist. Komeda became one of the most prominent Jazz musicians during the post-war thaw in Sixties Poland, though Komeda was a stage name employed to divert the attentions of both the political and medical authorities, neither of whom would have taken kindly to his extra-curricular activities. In 1956 Komeda made his musical debut at a small, semi-official jazz festival at the coastal town of Sopot in Poland, the forerunner to the now annual Jazz Jamboree in Warsaw. Komeda completed his masterpiece in 1965, *Astigmatic*, widely regarded to be one of the best Jazz records of all time. By that time Komeda had with him a gifted group of musicians including the trumpeter Tomasz Stanko, Zbigniew Namyslowski on alto sax, Gunter Lenz on bass and Rune Carlsson on drums. In 1969, shortly after completing the haunting soundtrack for *Rosemary's Baby*, Komeda had a fall and badly injured his head. He returned home to Poland from the United States in a coma from which he never recovered. Komeda also regularly composed music for Jerzy Skolimowski – *Barrier* (*Bariera*, 1966), *Hands Up!* (*Rece do gory*, 1967/1981) and *Le Départ* (1967) – and for the animated films of Miroslaw Kijowicz - *Usmiech* (1965), *Klatki* (1966), *Sztandar* (1965), *Rondo* (1966), *Laterna Magica* (1967) and *Wiklinowy Kosz* (1967).

The Lamp/*Lampa* (1958)

Crew Cinematography: Krzysztof Romanowski. 15 mins.

According to John Parker's *Polanski*, *The Lamp* is about a doll maker whose shop burns to the ground through faulty wiring after he installs electricity. Apparently it wasn't a success and Polanski himself omits it from his own filmography.

Basia Kwiatkowska

Polanski cast 17-year-old Basia Kwiatkowska in his next film, *When Angels Fall*. Kwiatkowska was a former shepherdess from the mountain village of Szulechow. Her film break arrived when she won a contest staged by a magazine "To Get Beautiful Girls On Screen." Polanski met her when Tadeusz Chmielewski cast her in *Eva Wants To Sleep* (1958). Polanski proposed to Kwiatkowska and they were quickly married on September 9, 1959, in Lodz. The poor couple stayed with Krzysztof Komeda and his wife Sofia in Cracow before moving back to Polanski's room in Lodz. Kwiatkowska left Polanski during one of his early visits to Paris. She later married Carl Boehm, ironically, the star of one of Polanski's favourite films, *Peeping Tom* (1960).

When Angels Fall/*Gdy spadaja anioly* (1959)

Cast Barbara Kwiatkowska (as Barbara Lass), Andrzej Kondratiuk, Henryk Kluba, Roman Polanski, Andrezej Konstenko, Jakub Goldberg.

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, based on a short story by Leszek Szymaeski; Cinematography: Henryk Kucharski; Set Design: Kazimierz Wisniak; Music: Krzysztof Komeda. 22 mins.

Story A wrinkled old woman works as an attendant in a public lavatory. She looks back upon her life – her son, her seduction by a cavalryman, the death of her lover. Her memories are interrupted by the chores that make up her present life. She is reunited with her lover, an angel crashes through the skylight, killing her, thus setting her free.

Origins Polanski's graduation film, less confrontational than *Two Men And A Wardrobe*, is a much more intriguing work. In his autobiography, Polanski recalls that the idea originated in a newspaper article

about an elderly lavatory attendant who had a mystical vision. For Polanski, the lavatory attendant's life seems to epitomise vacuity, drudgery, monotony: " Nobody would ever look at an old crone in a public lavatory, with her pathetic saucerful of coins and her vacant, impersonal air, and conceive of her having had a life imbued with passion and drama."

The Influence of Naïf Painting When Angels Fall is Polanski's most 'Polish' film to date and one that is rooted in Polish naïve painting. When Jean-André Fieschi and Michel Delahaye interviewed Polanski in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, he elaborated: "I tried to ballast the flashbacks with certain references, among others, to Polish naïve painting, especially that of the nineteenth century, Jacek Maichewski, for example."

Polish Themes With the exception of *The Pianist*, *When Angels Fall* is the only one of Polanski's films to deal with ' Polish themes', the brutality and absurdity of wartime experience. The juxtaposition of age and youth is reminiscent of Gombrowicz's *Pornography.* The old woman, seemingly straight out of a similar scene in *Ashes And Diamonds*, was found in a home for the elderly.

Drag Cameo Polanski himself plays the old woman in middle age. He would return to drag in *The Tenant*. It is typical of Polanski and comparable to Woody Allen's early films: acting in front of the camera goads us to see the story as loaded with personal meaning, but its execution (unashamed drag) is so theatrical that it conceals more about Polanski than it actually reveals.

The Verdict Polanski's most atypical film, *When Angels Fall* is easily the most audacious as well as personal of his short films. Though less overtly innovative than its predecessor, *Two Men And A Wardrobe*, *When Angels Fall* is definitely worth seeking out. 4/5

Andrzej Munk

After graduating from Lodz, Polanski became an assistant director with Kamera, one of Poland's eight production companies, working with the French television director Jean-Marie Drot on a series of documentaries on Polish culture, then as assistant to Andrzej Munk. Though Andrzej Munk's films shared the same concern as Wajda's, his treatment was much more ascetic. His sceptical approach as well as his

ironic treatment of both the grotesque and the absurd bear comparison with Polanski's early shorts. Polanski worked on *Bad Luck* (*Zezowate szczescie*, 1960), a film about a political opportunist beset by failures, the controversial moral being that people should start thinking for themselves. Sadly, Munk was killed in a road accident during his subsequent film, the harrowing *Passenger* (*Pasazerka*, 1961).

In March 1960 Polanski went to France for about eighteen months. He arrived in Paris with only a change of shabby clothes, a print of *Two Men And A Wardrobe*, a feature-length script he had collaborated on with Goldberg and Skolimowski, another short script developed with Goldberg, and the screenplay he had tried to write for his wife. His earlier contact with Drot enabled Polanski to work on another short, *The Fat And The Lean*.

The Fat And The Lean/Le gros et le maigre (1961)

Cast Andre Katelbach, Roman Polanski.

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Jean-Pierre Rousseau; Director of Photography: Jean-Michel Boussaguet; Editor: Roman Polanski; Music: Krzysztof Komeda. Production: Claude Joudioux/APEC (Paris). 16 mins.

Story A grotesquely obese man sits outside his ramshackle house waited on by a tiny servant who tires himself out performing menial tasks and entertaining his master. When the servant threatens to leave for the city, the master pacifies him by making him a gift of a goat. However, the goat is tied to the servant, and it becomes even more difficult for him to rush about at the fat master's bidding. The master removes the goat and the servant is so relieved that he works faster than ever before.

A Gross Misunderstanding The critical success of the film relied particularly on the fact that *The Fat And The Lean* was perceived as a fable of the inequalities of the capitalist class system. However, given Polanski's outright contempt for 'clever' art, not to mention his own experience in post-war Poland, it seems unlikely that he travelled all the way from communist Poland to Paris to ridicule the class system. Conversely, Polanski treads similar ground as he did with *Two Men And A Wardrobe*, though austere absurdity displaces outright surreal effects. If

anything, Polanski leans heavily on Beckett, Lucky and Pozzo on loan from *Waiting For Godot*. 3/5

In 1962 Polanski returned to Poland to do his first full-scale direction job for Kamera. However, Kwiatkowska had by now left Polanski, leaving him in deep depression. According to Jerzy Skolimowski, the assignment was given to Polanski by Andrzej Munk in order to divert his attention away from his marital break-up.

Mammals/*Ssaki* (1962)

Cast Henryk Kluba, Michal Zolnierhienicz

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Andrzei Kondratiuk; Cinematography: Andrzej Kostenko; Editor: Halina Prugar, J Niedzwiedzka; Music: Krzysztof Komeda. Production: Film Polski/Studio Miniatur Filmowych Se-Ma-For (Lodz). 11 mins.

Story Mammals portrays two male characters travelling across the snowy Polish landscape. One sits on a sleigh while the other pulls it. Then they change positions and continue to take turns. The one who pulls tries constantly, by faking different ailments, to take the seat in the sleigh – to be pulled and not have to do the pulling. Finally they fight, and while they are preoccupied, a third man comes along and steals the sleigh.

Cartoon Characters Though thematically very similar to *The Fat And The Lean*, *Mammals* is a more kinetic affair, its rhythm closer to that found in animation. The white background not only anticipates the opening of *The Fearless Vampire Killers* but it also pares down the drama to formal elements – two men fighting over a sledge. *Mammals* finds company in an early live-action short by Borowczyk, *Gavotte* (1967). 4/5

After *Mammals*, Munk told Polanski, Goldberg and Skolimowski that he would help them get clearance and money from the state film board to make *Knife in the Water* – but only once the script was ready. With the advice of Gérard Brach, Polanski's screenplay was put into production under Munk's supervision.

Knife In the Water/*Nóz w wodzie* (1962; aka *The Young Lover, The Long Sunday*)

Cast Leon Niemczyk (Andrzej), Jolanta Umecka (Christine), Zygmunt Malanowicz (The Student).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Jerzy Skolimowski, Jakub Goldberg; Producer: Stanislaw Zylewicz; Cinematography: Jerzy Lipman; Editor: Halina Prugar; Music: Krzysztof Komeda; Sound: Halina Paszkowska. Production: ZRF Kamera (Warsaw). 8,460 ft. 94 mins.

Story An attractive young woman, Christine takes the wheel of an enviable French car belonging to her partner Andrzej, a sports columnist. Whilst Andrzej criticises her driving skills, a reckless student leaps out in front of the car. Andrzej instigates a challenge, hoping to relieve Christine's boredom and elevate his own self-esteem. Andrzej not only gives the student a ride, but also insists on him accompanying them on their yacht trip. Attracted to Christine, the student becomes increasingly clumsy. He spends his time jabbing the point of a pocket knife rapidly between the fingers of his other hand. Andrzej argues with the student, who topples overboard, vanishing into the lake. Andrzej dives in to save him, though he fails to find the student and swims ashore. Despite an earlier claim that he couldn't swim, the student manages to hide behind the nearest buoy. Later he returns to the yacht to find Christine. The student seduces Christine before leaving. Later on land, Christine catches Andrzej on his way to the police, and assures him that the boy is alright. Andrzej's complacency in supposing that she may be lying in order to put his mind at rest goads her to hint at her own infidelity. Andrzej is left uncertain as to whether or not to believe that he is guilty of drowning the boy, or whether his wife has been unfaithful to him.

Collaborative Tensions On the surface *Knife In The Water* is a story of sexual jealousy, though its depth is the product of separate collaborative tensions between Polanski, Jerzy Skolimowski and (uncredited co-scriptwriter) Gérard Brach. *Knife In The Water* links violent threat with sexual possession in both narrative and more abstract social forms.

Dramatically Impoverished Knife In The Water is not so much absurd, rather dramatically impoverished, pared down to the point where we perceive only machismo competition in terms of athletic skill,

technique and sexual prowess. The jarring incongruities of *Two Men And A Wardrobe* are absent, but what's left, as in Pinter's plays, is no less ridiculous.

Sexual Trespassing As with *The Fat And The Lean* and *Mammals*, *Knife In The Water* is about power, though reiterated in sexual terms. Significantly, there is never an explicit sexual conflict between Andrzej and the student over Christine. It seems probable that Andrzej no longer cares about Christine, their passion long since dissipated. Andrzej is only interested in affirming his territory and possessions, both sexual and material. Andrzej perceives himself in terms of his job, his yacht and his wife. His confidence is undermined by the student's apparent nonchalance, his lack of admiration. Envy or jealousy would be fine, but the student's indifference arouses Christine's interest and threatens Andrzej's self-esteem.

Class Antagonism If Andrzej's sexual jealousy is aroused by Christine's attraction to the student, then *Knife In The Water* operates on two sets of antagonisms, one between two generations – those either side of Wajda's 'generation' – and class antagonism. This Polish dimension smacks of Skolimowski's concerns, here succeeding where Wajda failed with *Innocent Sorcerers*.

Youthful Nihilism Despite the Freudian connotations of the knife, the student's game, as Raymond Durgnat suggests in *Sexual Alienation In The Cinema: The Dynamics Of Sexual Freedom*, is a focussing of the mind preoccupied by the exasperated aimlessness of everyday life. The knife game, like sailing (not to mention the game Andrzej initiated by picking up the student), depends on the satisfaction gained from the ascendancy of skill over danger. The student's impulsive and ultimately destructive momentum smacks of youthful nihilism. When Andrzej throws his knife overboard, the student rises to the challenge, only to get knocked into the sea. Andrzej is physically stronger than the student, though the student masochistically exaggerates his disadvantage – claiming he is not able to swim – turning it into a definite advantage over Andrzej, who is now obliged to rescue the helpless crewmate in the eye's of their judge, Christine.

The plot thickens when the student swims to a buoy and dives underwater, terrifying Andrzej into thinking he has drowned. The underdog lies low, tricking Andrzej. He is not what the materialistically superior

Andrzej thinks he is. The student risks himself under the car and when he hides behind the buoy it is without any plan, just animal cunning. As Durgnat points out, though the student is awkward in society, he is a 'natural' in his instincts, sabotaging the writer's natural order. Andrzej fails at life-saving – he can't even find the student's body – nor does he suspect the student is hiding. Both failures would be normal enough, but Andrzej is shaken by the loss of control incurred by this chance accident.

Verdict Christine tells the student that he and her husband are actually two of a kind. As Jean-Paul Torok observed, her bitter tone reminds us that the boy's ironic self-deprecation is no less false and destructive than the writer's pomposity. Not only is *Knife In The Water* an outstanding debut, it is unique in Polanski's filmography as, on the one hand, the only feature shot entirely in Poland and, on the other, exhibiting a social concern, typical of Skolimowski's subsequent films but generally absent from Polanski's own. 4/5

3: Power Plays Abroad (1963-1966)

Despite creating frictions with the Polish authorities, *Knife In The Water* became an art-house success abroad. The film was nominated for an Oscar (honourably losing out to Fellini's *8½*, 1962) and there was talk about a remake starring Warren Beatty, Richard Burton and Liz Taylor, in the roles of the student, Andrzej and Christine respectively. Having tasted Hollywood, Polanski set his sights on getting a film deal in the US. However, the English language was a problem and Polanski returned to Europe, though to France not Poland.

World's Greatest Swindles/Les plus belles escroqueries du monde (1963; aka *The Beautiful Swindlers*, *The World's Most Beautiful Swindlers*)

Episode: *The River Of Diamonds/La rivière de diamants*

Cast Nicole Karen, Jan Teulings, Arnold Gelderman.

Crew Director: Roman Polanski (other episodes by Claude Chabrol, Ugo Gregoretti, Hiromichi Horikawa); Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach; Cinematography: Jerzy Lipman; Editor: Rita van Royen; Music: Krzysztof Komeda. Production: Ulysses Productions, Primex/Vides/Caesar/Lux Films/Toho/Towa (Amsterdam/Paris/Rome/Tokyo). 33 mins.

Story Polanski went to Amsterdam to shoot his section of this portmanteau film. *The Best Swindles In The World* is, like *RoGoPaG* (*Laviamoci il cervello*, 1962) and *Love At Twenty* (*L'amour à vingt ans*, 1962), one of several international portmanteau films produced during the early Sixties. The title refers to a stolen necklace. Struggling to balance his traditional notions of film-making against the avant-garde French style, soon ran into directorial dilemmas. Polanski wrote in his autobiography that for him "a film has to have a definite dramatic and visual shape...as opposed to the rather flimsy shape that a lot of films were being given by the *nouvelle vague*...it has something to be finished, like a sculpture, almost something you can touch...it has to be rigorous and disciplined."

Verdict Portmanteau films are by nature uneven affairs, one part exacerbating its strength or weakness against the others. Polanski's episode is arguably the best, though that's not really saying much. 1/5

Returning to Paris, Polanski wrote the scenario for *Do You Like Women?* with Gérard Brach, based on a novel by Georges Bardawil. Jean Léon directed the film, though in terms of theme and execution it's typical Polanski.

Do You Like Women?/Aimez-vous les femmes? (1963)

Story Jérôme discovers that an exclusive vegetarian restaurant turns out to be merely a front for a clandestine cult of high-class cannibals. Beautiful girls prepared with seasoning are served to members with silver service. Jérôme is torn between twin sisters in white PVC. He falls in love with one, while the other turns out to be the villain of the piece. Though he never quite works out which one of the sisters he's rescued, he loves her anyway.

Cannibalised Surrealism Twin sisters, one good and bad, an emblem of Sade (Justine and Juliette). Sadomasochistic fantasies are played out in a nightclub where girls are apparently stripped through the cuts of a bullwhip. Jerome is sewn up in sheets. Guido Crepax recycles the cannibalistic feast set piece several times over in his erotic surrealist comic strip *Bianca*.

Love Hurts Raymond Durgnat saw Jérôme's predicament as leading straight into a tangle of paradoxes about eroticism, masochism, personal loyalty and orthodox morality: "Is love love if it isn't masochistic? Is it ever the real person whom we love, or merely a persona which may well be superficial, and yet so precious to us as still to be worthy of our love? Insofar as everybody has his secrets, can we ever love a real person?" Or, as Sonya (Diane Keaton) consoles her love-sick sister (Jessica Harper) at the end of Woody Allen's *Love And Death* (1975), "...to love is to suffer, not to love is to suffer, not to suffer is to suffer, to suffer is to suffer..."

Verdict The prospect that Polanski could have directed *Do You Like Women?* makes the flat direction of the film doubly frustrating. Despite some fantastic imagery, this black comedy would have been better risking outright bad taste by being even more excessive. 2/5

After scripting *Do You Like Women?* Polanski was particularly depressed and preparing to return to Poland to avoid being drafted into the French army, despite the fact that he was now certain to be drafted into the Polish army. However, a Polish American producer, Gene Gutowski, tracked Polanski down and urged him to come over to London and direct in English. Polanski accepted.

Gene Gutowski

Born in 1923, Gene Gutowski was a Polish-American who had escaped Poland during the last weeks of the war and established himself with an American army OSS unit in southern Germany. As Gutowski spoke German, he assisted in the interrogation of captured German military personnel. A year later, he was sent to the US, given an American Army rank, and assigned to a Pentagon intelligence unit. Gutowski later married and had a family, which he was to leave in the mid-1950s to become a film producer based in London. Gutowski was aware of Polanski's eagerness to break into Hollywood, as well as his weak English. When Polanski moved to London, Gutowski acted as both his agent and executive producer. Gutowski rejected offers from other producers for Polanski to direct for them, instead forming a company with Polanski, Cadre Films, to produce their own projects. Polanski was most eager to direct a script that he prepared in Paris with Gérard Brach, a project later realised as *Cul-De-Sac*. Looking to raise money for this project, Gutowski turned to Compton Films. Compton specialised in sexploitation films, and they said no to Polanski's script. However, they did express interest in him directing something a little more exploitative, like a horror film. Polanski and Gutowski decided to shoot a horror film to raise the money for *Cul-De-Sac*. If only all capital raising ventures were as imaginative as *Repulsion*.

Repulsion (1965)

Cast Catherine Deneuve (Carol), Yvonne Furneaux (Helen), John Fraser (Colin), Ian Hendry (Michael), Patrick Wymark (The Landlord), Roman Polanski (A Spoons Player).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach, David Stone; Producer: Gene Gutowski; Cinematography: Gilbert Taylor; Art Director: Seamus Flannery; Editor: Alastair McIntyre; Music: Chico Hamilton; Assistant Director: Ted Sturgis; Sound: Stephen Dalby; Executive Producers: Michael Klinger, Tony Tenser; Associate Producers: Robert Sterne, Sam Wayneberg. Production: Compton/Tekli. 9360 ft. 104 mins.

Story Carol Ledoux is a withdrawn Belgian girl living with her sister Helen on the top floor of a rather dingy flat in South Kensington. She works as a manicurist in a beauty salon. Before Helen holidays with her (married) lover Michael, she prepares a rabbit for Carol. Carol evidently loathes Michael, she bins his clothes when he tries to embrace her. Carol lies transfixed in bed as she hears her sister climax in the adjacent room. Left alone, Carol starts to go to pieces, she sees the reflections of men in the wardrobe mirror, wanders aimlessly around South Kensington, cuts a customer's finger in the Salon. The plaster cracks, molesting hands plunge out of the walls and the ticking of clocks become deafening. When her boyfriend Colin turns up to find out if they still have any sort of relationship, Carol bludgeons him with a candlestick. She drags his body into the bath, full of cold water she's forgotten to empty. Carol frantically barricades the front door, lending her some comfort, while she sews and sings to herself. Michael's wife calls and, mistaking Carol for Helen, insults her. Carol cuts the phoneline with a razor before slashing the sleazy landlord. Helen and Michael return to find Carol hidden under the bed, the flat in chaos and a rotting rabbit. Michael carries the catatonic girl out of the flat, past her neighbours. The camera pans around the flat before closing in on an old family photograph, ending with Carol's eyes...

Modern Horror Like other European horror films (or those with European sensibilities at least) of the Forties, Fifties and Sixties – Jacques Tourneur's *Cat People* (1942), Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* (1955), Georges Franju's *Eyes Without A Face* (*Les yeux*

sans visage, 1959), Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* and Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) – *Repulsion* doesn't rely upon the supernatural. Rather, it reiterates the staples of gothic horror, particularly the haunted house, in a post-Freudian consciousness. However, as Hitchcock's cod-Freudian denouncement of Norman Bates at the end of *Psycho* goes to show, it is the absolute certainty of psychiatrists that is really frightening. To use the old saying that Milosz uses as a preface to *The Captive* Mind: "When someone is honestly 55% right, that's good. If someone is 60% right, that's wonderful. But when someone is 75% right, there's call for suspicion and if someone's 100% right they're simply lying."

Psycho Inside Out Raymond Durgnat pointed out that *Repulsion* is *Psycho* turned inside out. Polanski's protagonist is a woman, through whose eyes we see the outside world, with whom identification is consistent and of whose mental processes any explanation is conspicuously absent. The haunted house is inside Carol's head and is made all the more frightening because she can't escape. *Psycho* introduces us to a structure of motivations, whereas *Repulsion* takes that as read and offers us the experience, the snapping of a mind, not in one grandiose convulsion but quietly, progressively. However, both *Psycho* and *Repulsion* end on a pair of blank, catatonic stares.

A Woman Possessed Carol is haunted or 'possessed' by sexual disgust. Sex is the modern-day Devil, and so *Repulsion* makes *The Exorcist* (1975) appear medieval BY comparison. The lineage of *Repulsion* includes both Jerzy Kawalerowicz's *Mother Joanna Of The Angels* (*Matka Joanna od aniolow*, 1961) and Zulawski's delirious *Possession* (1981). Kawalerowicz's film is based on Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz's historical novella set in 17th-century Poland. The drama is an effective, mystical study of a priest-exorcist who comes to exorcise a group of convent nuns, based on the same Loudon trial documented by Huxley, dramatised by John Whiting and filmed by Ken Russell in *The Devils* (1971). Whilst the gothic horror of Kawalerowicz's film is brought out on purely an aesthetic level, the 'possession' by sexual insanity in *Repulsion* is closer to Zulawski's. At heart, the 'horrors' of *Repulsion* and *Possession* are existential conundrums: Carol's sexual disgust and the psychotic behaviour of Anna, the protagonist of *Possession*, do not arise from physical desires or orgasms. Rather, the fear they share is that of being possessed by another. Anna's crisis arises during marital infi-

delity, Carol's during burgeoning sexuality – their breakdowns find a curious Sartre-esque expression: characters entering or trapped in sexual relationships who nonetheless refuse to give up their freedom, which is impossible.

Reinvigorated Expressionism The cracked walls and lascivious corridors in *Repulsion* constitute an attempt to reinvigorate the stream-of-consciousness aesthetic of Expressionism. The natural ascendant of Carol's madwoman's-eye-view décor *à la The Cabinet Of Dr Caligari* (1919). However, the grotesqueries of George Grosz and Max Beckmann infiltrate less overt scenes, such as the one in which Carol walks through South Kensington past crab-like disabled buskers (one of which is played by Polanski) and lecherous old men. Raymond Durgnat suggested that Carol's isolation and violence is only a climactic form of all the reciprocal repulsions that make up our 'sane' society. *Repulsion* is certainly not *Family Life* (1971; aka *Wednesday's Child*), though Polanski's picture of madness as a social product is in keeping with the Sixties radical psychiatrist R D Laing. Ingmar Bergman relied upon similar expressionist shock effects for his own 'breakdown' period – *Persona* (1966), *Shame* (*Skammen*, 1968), *Hour Of The Wolf* (*Vargtimmen*, 1968), *The Passion Of Anna* (*En Passion*, 1969). Polanski has been criticised in both *Repulsion* and its spiritual successor, *The Tenant*, for resorting to these "overblown facile effects." He is not alone: the same critics suggest that Kubrick should have dropped all allusions to the supernatural in *The Shining* (1980) and confirm Tarkovsky's regrets about clinging to the SF premise of *Solaris* (1971). At best such critics are genre snobs, at worst it reveals a conception of cinema where the inner and outer world should be kept cleanly on two separate plates.

There's Always Freud Expressionism enjoyed a particularly close, and occasionally collaborative, association with psychoanalysis. *Repulsion* also falls into a clear oedipal pattern: elder sister as mother, every male caller as father.

Pessimism Durgnat argues that the society in *Repulsion* cannot but accommodate the violence which each of us inflicts on others by the very fact of our existence and which we undergo at the hands of others, a violence which makes nonsense of individualism and reformist idealism alike.

Verdict Repulsion is excellent. A harrowing performance from Catherine Deneuve and brilliant use of décor and photography compensate for the occasional dated line to make *Repulsion* an all-time classic, not just of horror but cinema, full stop. 5/5

Between *Repulsion* and the final draft of *Cul-De-Sac*, Polanski had written, in collaboration with Brach, a story of a divorced American dentist who decides he is sick of American women and travels through Europe in search of a more congenial wife. According to Ivan Butler, the black comedy was to have been called *Cherchez la femme* and Larry Gelbart was engaged at one point to Anglicise and revive the script. *Cherchez la femme* would have been the second film made by Cadre Films and Filmways. However financing could not be found and the project was sold to MGM, never to be realised.

Cul-De-Sac (1966)

Cast Donald Pleasance (George), Françoise Dorléac (Teresa), Lionel Stander (Richard), Jack MacGowran (Albie), Iain Quarrier (Christopher), Jacqueline Bisset (Jacqueline).

Crew: Director: Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach; Producer: Gene Gutowski; Cinematography: Gilbert Taylor; Art Director: George Lack; Special Effects: Bowie Films; Editor: Alastair McIntyre; Music: Krzysztof Komeda; Assistant Director: Ted Sturgis; Sound: Stephen Dalby; Executive Producer: Sam Wayneberg. Production Company: Compton/Tekli. 9990 ft. 111 mins.

Story A broken-down jalopy is pushed along an endless roadway on either side of which lies sand and water. The car is pushed by a bulky, gravel-voiced man, Richard, whilst a lean, bespectacled passenger, Albie, handles the steering. The two have escaped from a bungled armed robbery. Both have sustained injuries, Richard has been shot in the arm whilst Albie has received more serious wounds in the stomach. Leaving Albie in the car, Richard follows some telephone wires to a small castle. A beautiful girl, Teresa, lies in the sand dunes with her lover, Cecil, whilst her husband, George, flies a kite. George is a short, bald, middle-aged man who has sold his business, left the city and his family to live with Teresa, a French nymphomaniac. Richard breaks

into the castle and tries to telephone his boss, Mr Katelbach. Teresa, meanwhile, is busy helping George into her nightdress. Richard holds them both at gunpoint and forces them to push the jalopy to the castle. The jalopy crashes into George's car and Albie soon dies. Albie is buried and a car arrives with some of George's old friends. Richard reluctantly plays George's butler in order not to arouse suspicion. A boy uses a rifle to put through a castle window, which George uses as an excuse to get the group off his island. Richard spanks Teresa with his belt when she places pieces of paper between his toes and lights them whilst he's sleeping. Katelbach calls to say he's deserting Richard. Teresa gets hold of the rifle. George accidentally shoots Richard. George returns to his castle to discover that Teresa has ran off with Cecil. George is left perched on a rock as the tide comes in calling for his wife Agnes.

Victim as Victimiser Richard, the victim of a bungled bank robbery, assumes control over George and Teresa. However, in order to remain inconspicuous to guests from the mainland, Richard plays at being George's butler. Richard is once again the victim, this time of Teresa's sadistic tricks, but retaliates with his considerable bulk and strength by spanking her over his knee with his belt. Richard is then the victim in an accidental shooting, whilst George, now in control, is left nonetheless powerless as Teresa leaves with Cecil under his nose.

Sexual Humiliation Submission in *Cul-De-Sac* is equated with an almost infantile sexuality. George consents to his humiliation in Teresa's cross-dressing game. As the 'man of the house' George, guarding his territory, creeps downstairs, only to be caught by Richard dressed "like a little fairy." No wonder George so readily relinquishes authority to Richard's effortless challenge. Upon being caught in the middle of her cruel but nonetheless provocative trick, Teresa pays the price and is punished by Richard. However, Richard doesn't rape Teresa, rather he takes her over his knees and spanks her like a naughty child, much to George's delight. Even when George "acts like a man" (i.e. threatens Richard at gunpoint), Teresa sexually rejects him in favour of Cecil.

Beckett Goes to Lindesfarne The original title of *Cul-De-Sac* was *When Katelbach Comes* which alludes to Samuel Beckett's most famous play. The title *Cul-De-Sac* suggests a very British take on existential matters, Sartre's *No Exit* 'up North'. Polanski had already made

clear his plans to film *Waiting For Godot*, though nothing came of it. Casting Beckett regular Jack MacGowran in the role of Albie must have been some consolation. *Cul-De-Sac* is the crowning achievement of Polanski's numerous forays into the absurd. The opening sequence with the scruffy Richard struggling to push Albie in the clapped-out jalopy is no less ridiculous than the poor goat in *The Fat And The Lean* or the sledge fight in *Mammals*. On the other hand, the incoming tide makes their efforts just as futile as the lives of Lucky and Pozzo in *Waiting For Godot* or the relationship of Fernando Arrabal's *Fando And Lis* (*Fando y Lis*, 1967). The dramatic structure of *Cul-De-Sac* hinges around a visitor instigating and participating in a series of misapplied actions as well as self-deceptive role-play comparable with Gombrowicz's *The Marriage*.

The Sad Fate of a Misanthropist Françoise Dorléac, Catherine Deneuve's sister, plays Teresa, though her character could not be more different than Carol in *Repulsion*. Whereas Carol is frigid, repelled by sexuality, Teresa is a nymphomaniac. If anything, it's George who is closer to Carol. Teresa acts more like a prick-teasing big sister. Rather than incarcerating himself in an urban flat, George uses money from the city to retire to a castle on Holy Island. George's life is the ideal of the Englishman's home taken to an extreme, which in turn reveals just how ridiculous it is. George's castle is his house, its walls and moat a defence against society. There's no romance either, only hate. By choosing a partner whose beauty is matched by her sexual infidelity, not only is George in denial over his hatred of friends, but his lover as well.

The Verdict Arguably Polanski's most original film, *Cul-De-Sac* is the culmination of a preoccupation with the absurd that was fostered in his native Poland but only reached maturity in England. Secondly, *Cul-De-Sac* exhibits Polanski's tremendous skill for handling pared-down, rigorously composed sexual dramas. However, the most remarkable aspect of *Cul-De-Sac* is Polanski's use of location, arguably the most imaginative in all British films to date. Finally, the UK television version of *Cul-De-Sac*, occasionally screened on BBC2, is significantly longer (and superior) to the current UK video release. 5/5

Jan Lenica

Immediately after the international success of *Knife In The Water*, *Sight And Sound* interviewed Polanski. He was asked to name his favourite film-makers. Polanski's first choice, Wajda, was unsurprising, though his second, Jan Lenica (born in Poznan, 1928), may have seemed a little obscure. However, Lenica's absurd graphics and Komeda's music played integral roles in establishing how 'cool' Polanski's early films were.

Besides producing the title sequence for *Cul-De-Sac* Jan Lenica created the poster artwork for *Repulsion* (1965) and *Cul-De-Sac* (1966). Both are childlike gouaches, verging on the abstract, though immediately distinctive. Like Polanski films, Lenica's career in poster art and set-design cultivated associations with the absurd, a preoccupation that culminated with a series of remarkable animations during the Sixties and Seventies. Together with another poster designer, Walerian Borowczyk, Lenica produced several short animated films *Once Upon A Time* (*Byl sobie raz*, 1957), *Education Days* (*Dni oswiaty*, 1957), *Banner Of Youth* (*Szalandar Mlodych*,1957), *Striptease* (*Strep-Tease*, 1957), *Requited Sentiments* (*Nagrodzone uczucia*, 1958) and *Dom* (1958), arguably their most brilliant animation. Dom is composed of several absurdist episodes using a number of different techniques (cut-outs, pixilation and object animation), exploiting the full potential of film animation. Lenica's first solo film was *Monsieur Tête* (1959), narrated by Eugène Ionesco. Afterwards, Lenica was invited back to Poland, where he produced a Henryk Sienkiewicz animated pastiche, *New Janko The Musician* (*Nowy Janko Muzykant*, 1960). In 1962 Lenica created *Labyrinth* (*Labyrint*, 1963), a self-consciously Kafka-esque tale of a winged lonely man literally devoured by totalitarian rule. Along with Jiri Trnka's *The Hand* (*Ruka*, 1965), *Labyrinth* is considered to be one of the finest political animations ever made.

In 1962, Lenica moved to the Federal Republic to make a wordless condensation of Ionesco's *Rhinoceroses* (*Die Nashorner*, 1963). *A* (1964) was a formally austere pessimistic tale of interrogation. Between 1966 and 1969 Lenica laboured single-handedly on a remarkably ambitious feature length animation *Adam 2* (1968). Lenica returned to making shorter films, most notably *The Flower Woman* (*La femme fleur*, 1969), a poem to Art Nouveau with a commentary by André Pieyre de

Mandiargues and music by Georges Delerue. *Fantorro, The Last Arbiter* (*Fantorro, le dernier justicier*, 1971), *Hell* (*Enfer,*1973), *Still Life* (live action, 1973) and *Landscape* (1974). In 1976, Lenica returned to animation, choosing Alfred Jarry's *King Ubu* (*Ubu roi*, 1976) as the subject for a medium-length feature project. In 1979 he edited this German production into a later French production of two other Ubu plays, *Ubu cocu* and *Ubu enchâiné*, a venture which resulted in the feature-length *Ubu et la grande gidouille* (1979), the only one of Lenica's films to rely on dialogue. Lenica died in 2001.

4: Vampires And Devils (1967-1968)

Sharon Tate was born into a military family in Dallas in 1943, the eldest of three daughters. After winning a number of beauty contests as a teenager she acquired an agent, Martin Ransohoff. After a television series, *Petticoat Junction*, Tate starred in an occult horror film, *Eye Of The Devil* (1965), alongside David Niven and Deborah Kerr. She was introduced to Polanski at a London party and he cast her in the role of Sarah in his next film, *The Fearless Vampire Killers*, with Ransohoff acting as co-producer. Polanski and Tate became lovers during the making of the film. Polanski photographed a *Playboy* spread of Tate titled, unsurprisingly, *The Tate Gallery.*

The Fearless Vampire Killers (1967; aka *Dance Of The Vampires*)

Cast Jack MacGowran (Professor Abronsius), Roman Polanski (Alfred), Alfie Bass (Shagal), Jessie Robins (Rebecca), Sharon Tate (Sarah), Ferdy Mayne (Count Von Krolock), Iain Quarrier (Herbert).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach; Producer: Gene Gutowski; Director of Photography: Douglas Slocombe; Production Designer: Wilfred Shingleton; Art Director: Fred Carter; Costumes: Sophie Devine; Editor: Alastair McIntyre; Music: Krzysztof Komeda; Choreography: Tutte Lemkow; Make-up: Tom Smith; Titles: André François; Assistant Director: Roy Stevens; Sound: George Stephenson; Executive Producer: Martin Ransohoff; Production Manager: David W Orton. Production: Cadre Films/Filmways. 9654 ft. 107 mins.

Story Professor Abronsius, an undervalued scientist and author of *The Bat And Its Mysteries*, is on a sacred mission with his one and only faithful disciple, Alfred. A sleigh carries them to an inn. The Professor is frozen solid. The innkeeper, Shagal, and his wife, Rebecca, thaw out the Professor. The Professor and Alfred are vampire hunters and excited by the sight of garlic hanging around the room. Upon inquiring about a nearby castle, their host goes numb. The Professor suspects that this is where the chief vampire, Count Von Krolock, resides. Alfred falls in love with Shagal's beautiful daughter, Sarah, a compulsive bather. Try-

ing to impress her, Alfred heats some water for her to bathe in. Alfred spies on Sarah bathing through the keyhole. Suddenly, Krolock sweeps down, revealing his vampire fangs. Alfred, helpless, watches Krolock disappear with Sarah through the skylight. Abronsius finds Shagal's body drained of blood, but still the locals doubt his explanation, preferring to heap the blame on wolves. Shagal returns from the dead as a very Jewish vampire in search of a servant girl, Magda. The Professor and Alfred raid Krolock's castle, fail to infiltrate his crypt and wind up in his library searching through old sex instruction manuals and telescopes in search of Sarah. Herbert, Krolock's camp vampire son, takes a shine to Alfred, whilst Krolock confronts Abronsius. The film ends with Abronsius and Alfred's clandestine pursuit of Krolock and Sarah in a spectacular vampire ball. They manage to escape with Sarah. However, she bites into Alfred's neck and Abronsius carries them both away, blissfully unaware that he is about to spread the vampire plague.

Vampire Parody The Fearless Vampire Killers is a very self-conscious parody of the vampire genre, in particular *Kiss Of The Vampire* and *Brides Of Dracula*. However, Polanski's references extend beyond Hammer horror. The film opens with a loose pastiche of the opening of Carl Dreyer's sombre *Vampyr* (1932, based on J Sheridan le Fanu's novelette *Carmilla*) and ends up satirising the vampire's aristocratic credentials with Richard III and the Duchess of Tyrol on the guest list of Von Krolock's ball. Quoting Puccini's *La Bohême*, Alfred's melodramatic last words to Sarah compare vampirism to consumption. Polanski also derives a number of gags by dragging out the latent homosexuality in vampire films with Krolock's camp vampire son, Herbert. More obscure is the Eastern European sensibility that Polanski imports into the film, particularly evident in a scene when a Jewish caricature, Shagal, about to lunch on Magda, is confronted with a crucifix and laughs "you got the wrong vampire!" Shagal alludes to Chagal, who in turn mythologised Vitebsk, a Polish town destroyed by the Nazis.

Pessimism Alfred and Abronius are both outsiders, rejected by the village community. Whereas the villagers in Terrance Fisher's Hammer films triumphantly storm the castles of the imposing vampire aristocracy (satirised by Paul Morrissey in *Blood For Dracula* (1974; aka *Andy Warhol's Dracula* in which Polanski had a cameo role), Polanski's villagers resign themselves to the futility of their situation, submitting

to the shadow of Von Krolock's castle. With the villagers stuck in a rut, Abronsius' idealism only makes things worse, as his expedition ends up spreading vampirism to the wider community. The film ends on a curious note: Sarah is lost to Von Krolock and Alfred and Abronsius have unwittingly smuggled vampirism out of the village, fulfilling Krolock's ambition. With Sarah's bite, Alfred too has become a vampire and part of a growing community of vampires. As a living member of the cast, Abronsius' hours are now numbered.

Voyeurism Sarah is the object of both Alfred's and Von Krolock's desire in *The Fearless Vampire Killers*. Two shots of Sarah take place as Alfred peers at her body through a keyhole as she takes a bath. One of them culminates in her father spanking her and the other with Von Krolock ravishing her in the bathtub. Alfred is helplessly excluded in the latter, much like Jeffrey Beaumont in Dorothy Valence's bedroom wardrobe in David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986). Both scenes have the person being spied upon submitting to violence, both are charged with an infantile sexuality thanks to their voyeuristic set-up. Another more ambiguous shot is one in which Sarah is framed through the window of the Inn as she watches Alfred build a snowman outside. Children destroy the snowman and Alfred, now humiliated under Sarah's gaze, consoles himself by groping a barmaid's breasts.

But why are the exteriors shots so grainy? Polanski originally intended to shoot the film in the Panavision 2.35:1 aspect ratio but MGM insisted that Polanski shoot using the cheaper 1.85:1 ratio. When the production was forced into the studio (the production was to be shot on location in a castle in the Dolomites) because of the lack of snow, Polanski insisted that the rest should be shot using the 2.35:1 ratio. To match the aspect ratios, Polanski simply cropped the 1.85:1 exterior shots and stepped them up at the printing stage.

The Musical In 2000 Polanski adapted *The Fearless Vampire Killers* for the Viennese stage with librettist Michael Kunze and composer Jim Steinman. William Dudley's elaborate stage design recreated the snowy landscape of Polanski's original film as well as a dilapidated village pub and a huge horror palace with bizarre halls complete with a gallery of ancestral portraits, library, bathroom and crypt. Sue Blane was responsible for costume design and Hugh Vanstone lit the production.

The Verdict Vampire myth not only hints at coercive sexual betrayal (*Knife In The Water*, *Cul-De-Sac*), but relationship dominance is expressed as cannibalism (*Do You Like Women?).* As a macabre parody, *The Fearless Vampire Killers* is too restrained. If the success of Morrissey's *Blood For Dracula* lay in excess, the sexual elements in Polanski's film, like many Hammer films, are too prudish. His choice of allusions is at best obscure, at worst merely coy. If the intense, macabre atmosphere of *Repulsion* demanded audience involvement, the facetious gags of *The Fearless Vampire Killers* make it impossible. However, if *The Fearless Vampire Killers* looks and sounds fantastic thanks to exceptional photography by Douglas Slocombe and arguably Komeda's best film score. 3/5

Rosemary's Baby (1968)

Cast Mia Farrow (Rosemary Woodhouse), John Cassavetes (Guy Woodhouse), Ruth Gordon (Minnie Castevet), Sidney Blackmer (Roman Castevet), Maurice Evans (Hutch), Ralph Bellamy (Dr Sapirstein).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, based on the novel by Ira Levin; Producer: William Castle; Cinematography: William Fraker; Production designer: Richard Sylbert; Art Director: Joel Schiller; Set Director: Robert Nelson; Costumes: Anthea Sylbert; Editors: Sam O'Steen, Bob Wyman; Music: Krzysztof Komeda; Assistant Director: Daniel J McCauley; Sound: Harold Lewis; Associate Producer: Dona Holloway. Production: Paramount/William Castle Enterprises. 12290 ft. 137mins.

Story Rosemary Woodhouse and her husband Guy take a flat in the Bramford, a dingy block of flats in New York City, once the site of a witchcraft scandal according to an old friend, Hutch. It is home to the cannibalistic Trench sisters and Satanist Adrian Marcato. Rosemary meets a young girl, Terry, in the basement laundry. They discuss an odd silver charm around Terry's neck. Rosemary is repulsed by its smell. Shortly after, Terry leaps to her death. An odd, noisy as well as nosy couple invite Rosemary and Guy to dinner. Roman Castevet takes a distinct interest in Guy's career. Rosemary notices that all the pictures have been removed from the wall. Rosemary finds herself pregnant after a bizarre nightmare in which she is being raped by the Devil in the middle

of a black mass. Guy's acting career takes off when a rival candidate for a Broadway show suddenly goes blind. The Castevets recommend an exclusive doctor, Sapirstein, who prescribes Rosemary a drink which makes her pale and drawn. Hutch is struck down, left in a coma and Rosemary grows sick of Guy's preoccupation with the Castevets as well as the pain in her stomach. She becomes convinced that she is surrounded by a coven of witches when she is given a book left to her by Hutch, *All Of Them Witches*. With the aid of Scrabble letters, she discovers that Steven Marcato, Adrian's son, is an anagram of Roman Castevet. Convinced that her child is to be part of some Satanic ritual of which Sapirstein is a part, Rosemary runs to her old Doctor. To Rosemary's horror, Dr Hill turns her over to Sapirstein. Unable to escape, Rosemary gives birth. She is told that her baby has died at birth but she soon realises that the milk which is being drawn from her breasts is being given special care. In the end, Rosemary, knife in hand, finds her baby and like its father, it has goats' eyes. Unfortunately for Christianity, Rosemary 's maternal feelings prevent her from destroying her the child.

A Satanic New Testament Rosemary should have listened to Pope John Paul who reminded us that behind the initiation to sensual pleasure there loom narcotics. However, the US Roman Catholic Office did in fact deliver the most acute insight into *Rosemary's Baby.* Polanski's first Hollywood film was condemned because of "the perverted use which the film makes of fundamental Christian beliefs and its mockery of religious persons and practices." If *Repulsion* opened a sane eye on an insane world, Polanski turns Christian faith inside out and back to front in *Rosemary's Baby.* To make things worse, the film ends not on an apocalyptic note but on one of triumph as the witches' coven give thanks to their lord that, after 2000 years of the torture and persecution of Satanists, the world is about to enter its new era. The Devil worshippers at last have their Christ, its father, ironically, an actor. Their Virgin Mary is, appropriately enough, raped and prostituted by her own husband. Even Vidal Sassoon gets in on the act, fashioning Rosemary's hair like Rene Falconetti's in Carl Dreyer's silent film of another religious martyr, *The Passion Of Joan Of Arc* (*La passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, 1928). Adding insult to injury, the end of the (Christian) world is brought about by a disturbingly prosaic wish of Guy's. For the Devil

has promised that his acting career would prosper sufficiently to enable him to give up making television commercials and appear in films worthy of his artistic talent.

Psychosis or the Devil? Polanski's film of *Rosemary's Baby* is superior to Ira Levin's source novel because Rosemary's ordeal is all the more effectively expressed through an unresolved tension between two different interpretations of events. On the one hand, Rosemary is defiled and prostituted by inherently evil people and gives birth to the Antichrist. Slightly less exciting is a humanist reading positing Rosemary, like Carol in *Repulsion*, as a healthy mind persecuted by sick perverts with a shared hang-up for group sex. However, it's a humanist reading in reverse. Psychiatrists advocate psychopathological theories of witchcraft, maintaining that witches were mentally ill women. Persecution *per se* is the result of economic uncertainty, apprehensions about physical security and deflecting antisocial impulses against a single group. However, in *Rosemary's Baby* it is the witches who appear to be persecuting Rosemary.

Erotic Witchcraft The inquisition's Devil myth hinged upon his connection with sexual license and, conversely, the repressed sexuality of faithful Christians. Though Rosemary isn't particularly religious, she is not sexually repressed. If anything, Rosemary is the liberated girl next door. Raymond Durgnat points out that the sexual tension in *Rosemary's Baby* doesn't lie in any easily isolatable element. The two explanations of Rosemary's ordeal – innate paranoia or her destined role in a satanic ritual – are not mutually exclusive. Eroticism is the common element. Paranoia or persecution operates through violation of will (through the drugging of Chocolate Mousse, or having her ankles bound with bed sheets) whilst the Devil, part animal, subjugates her to uncontrollable sexual urges. Meanwhile, love, whilst not forgotten, disappears from the picture when Guy prostitutes Rosemary both in terms of her sexuality and in her motherhood. If Carol's madness in *Repulsion* is externalised, Rosemary's is eroticised.

Dionysiac Uprising Polanski emphasises the arrival of the Antichrist as a turning point in the antagonistic struggle between Christianity and the Devil. Rosemary's visions are of formal plastic conceptions of majestic visions, both old (the Sistine Chapel) and contemporary (Kennedy's Yacht). At threat are Apollonian values: static (personal relation-

ships), order (political) and rules (both moral and lawful). Alternatively, it was these very values which underpin American Society that brought them in the Sixties to the brink of Nuclear War (Cuban Missile Crisis) and apathetic remorse (Kennedy's assassination). However, reigned over by a ragbag of affluent geriatrics and a selfish actor, the future promises to be more orgiastic though it seems equally futile. If the Devil was conceived as God's converse, then ultimately there is very little difference between them.

The Devil's Eyes But do we see the Antichrist? Synopses of *Rosemary's Baby* generally refer to Rosemary's demonic baby. However, all that appears in the film is a subliminal superimposition of a cat's eyes which stare down at Rosemary during the nightmare she experiences whilst being raped at the beginning of the film. It's a hackneyed expression that horror films were scarier when they left things to imagination; Polanski's inspiration, however, stemmed from scientific fact. Polanski's approach to film making was not styled on the manuals of Pudovkin or the writings of Eisenstein but rather on the work of an English neuropsychologist Richard Gregory. According to Polanski, Gregory's books, which include *Eye And Brain* and *The Intelligent Eye*, lent scientific confirmation to many of his ideas that he'd instinctively believed in since his film school days, notably about the subjects of perspective, size constancy and optical illusions. Crucial to the climax of *Rosemary's Baby* is Gregory's belief in how our perceptions are shaped by the sum of our visual experiences. "My film-making ideal has always been to involve audiences so deeply in what they see that their visual experience approximates living reality. Anything that enhances this 'wraparound' effect – colour, large screens, stereo sound – is an asset." What keeps the humanist interpretation of events open is that we don't see a demonic child at the end of *Rosemary's Baby.* What keeps the demonic interpretation open is Rosemary's memory of her hallucination.

The Verdict Rosemary's Baby remains Polanski's biggest box-office success. However, Polanski's astute handling of potentially exploitative material (schlockmeister William Castle sold the rights of Ira Levin's book to Robert Evans at Paramount) doesn't betray its genre roots. Though Rosemary lives in a claustrophobic enclosure of Satanists, we empathise with her because she's nice, pretty and rather average. Per-

haps if Castle did direct his property (as he originally intended to) it might have been titled *I Married A Satanist*. It's a commercial manoeuvre nonetheless, erring on the side of caution. With the impending collapse of the Renaissance ceilings upholding the Christian era, the forecast for the Satanic era seems equally pessimistic. Rosemary's fantasies of the high-life with the Kennedys and Guy's ultimately materialist aspirations (acting success is equated with property and location) paint a rather venal picture of the average Sixties couple. The risk of such cynicism is that the viewer feels as if they've endured a succession of exhilarating yet facile manipulations by a cold individual who is ultimately unconcerned. But Polanski's risk pays off. 5/5

5: Life Imitating Art (1971-1972)

In 1969 Polanski scripted and produced with Gene Gutowski *A Day At The Beach*, an Angelo-Danish production starring Mark Burns and Peter Sellers. Shot in Denmark, adapted from a Dutch novel by Heere Heresma and directed by a young Moroccan, Simon Hesera. Cadre Films' other production, Jerzy (who now called himself Yurek) Skolimowski's multimillion dollar Italian production *The Adventures Of Gerard* (1969), was an expensive disaster, even by the director's own admission. At this point Polanski decided to dissolve his partnership with Gutowski. That same year Sharon Tate discovered she was pregnant.

Polanski developed two projects for himself to direct. The first was based on the life of the virtuoso violinist Niccolo Paganini, infamous for his scandalous lifestyle not to mention his rumoured pact with the Devil (a film of Paganini's life was eventually realised by Klaus Kinski as *Paganini*, 1989). The second project was a western about cannibalism, *Donner's Pass*. However, both projects were put aside when United Artists offered Polanski the chance to adapt and direct Robert Merle's *The Day Of The Dolphin* with Andrew Braunsberg as producer. While Tate was in Italy working on *Twelve + One* (1970), Polanski did pre-production on *The Day Of The Dolphin* in London. Four months pregnant, Tate flew to Los Angeles intent on buying a larger home for the Polanski family.

Tate and Polanski moved into their house on Cielo Drive on February 15, 1969. Polanski returned to London to complete pre-production, whilst Sharon returned to Rome to complete *Twelve + One*. The house was occupied by Wojtek Frykowski and his partner Abigail Folger. Tate and Polanski decided to have their baby in America. Tate boarded the QE2 in Southampton whilst Polanski planned to fly back. Tate joined Frykowski, Folger and her ex-boyfriend, Jay Sebring in Cielo Drive.

The Manson Murders

The bodies of Tate, Frykowski, Folger and Sebring were discovered on August 9, 1969. Further down Cielo drive, the police found the body of eighteen-year-old Steven Parent. Parent had been shot three times in the chest and once in the head. The bodies of Frykowski and Folger were found outside. Folger had twenty-eight stab wounds whilst Frykowski had fifty-one, two gun shot wounds and a bludgeoned head. Tate, eight and a half months pregnant, had sixteen stab wounds both in the chest and back. Her body was found hanging from a rafter on the ceiling, joined to Jay Sebring whose neck was also tied. Sebring had been shot once and stabbed seven times.

Polanski returned to Los Angeles with Victor Lownes. Sharon Tate was buried on August 13. In the press, Jerzy Kosinski was reported as saying that Frykowski had invited him to Cielo Drive on August 9. According to Kosinski, he narrowly escaped death due to a luggage mix-up. Lownes had recently read Kosinski's *Steps* (1968) and was so disturbed by the novel's sadistic, violent sexual episodes that he sent a letter to the LA Homicide Division suggesting that they question Kosinski. Lownes' speculation was unfounded but, as Barbara Leaming points out, Lownes' letter indicates how easy it is with a writer like Kosinski, who confronts art and life, to assume that the author is fully capable of living out his fictional work. Kosinski, like Polanski, had keyed his work to the audience's consciousness o f his image and has subtly encouraged this confusion.

Press coverage of the crimes implied that Polanski, by making such violent and grotesque films, had in some way brought the tragedy upon himself. The police began to investigate the idea that the murders were connected to the hedonistic lifestyle of Polanski and the victims. However, in December 1969, Susan Atkins, one of Charles Manson's 'Family', in jail for another crime, confessed to a cellmate. Atkins' confession implicated Manson. Manson had ordered his followers to go to the house on Cielo Drive, once rented by Terry Melcher. Manson was aware that Melcher was no longer the resident, though he wanted to kill whoever was there. Atkins, Manson, Charles 'Tex' Watson and Patricia Krenwinkel were prosecuted for the murders. A fifth member of the family, Linda Kasabian, was never prosecuted in return for becoming a

witness for the prosecution. The Manson trial is famously documented in Vincent Bugliosi's book *Helter Skelter.*

Unable to concentrate in the aftermath of the murders, Polanski scrapped *The Day of the Dolphin* project. After trying unsuccessfully to develop a film based on *Papillon*, Polanski contacted a friend in London, Kenneth Tynan.

Kenneth Tynan and *Oh! Calcutta!*

When Tynan organised *Oh! Calcutta!* in 1969, he had commissioned Polanski to make two four-minute films, each a single take. However, Polanski insisted that the films were shot using the widescreen format, which was financially unfeasible. Tynan was acting as literary advisor to the National Theatre in London and Polanski suggested that they collaborate on a film of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Macbeth (1971)

Cast Jon Finch (Macbeth), Francesca Annis (Lady Macbeth), Martin Shaw (Banquo), Nicholas Selby (Duncan), John Stride (Ross), Stephen Chase (Malcolm), Vic Abbott (Cawdor), Keith Chegwin (Fleance).

Crew: Director: Roman Polanski; Producers: Andrew Braunsberg, Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Kenneth Tynan, based on the play by William Shakespeare; Cinematography: Gilbert Taylor; Editor: Alastair McIntyre; Production Designer: Wilfred Shingleton; Second Unit Director: Hercules Bellville; Associate Producer: Timothy Burrill; Executive Producer: Hugh M Hefner. 140 minutes.

Story Three witches predict that Macbeth will be Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland, and Banquo will be the father of kings. Almost immediately, Macbeth hears that because of his bravery he is to be proclaimed Thane of Cawdor. He contemplates murdering Duncan, King of Scotland, so as to occupy the throne. Lady Macbeth, hearing of Macbeth's new title and the news that Duncan plans to visit their castle in Inverness, coerces Macbeth into murdering Duncan. Macbeth has a vision of a bloody dagger floating before him, leading him to Duncan's room. Duncan is horrifically murdered with daggers which Lady Macbeth plants on the bodyguards. Macbeth then kills the two bodyguards. When Malcolm, Duncan's son, flees, he is suspected of the murder and

Macbeth is crowned King of Scotland. In order to throw the witches prophecy, Macbeth intends to have Banquo and his son Fleance killed. Whilst Banquo is murdered, Fleance escapes. Banquo appears in an hallucination, driving Macbeth insane. Lady Macbeth tries to cover Macbeth's crisis. Macbeth visits the witches to hear of his future. He's told that he'll only fall when Birnam Wood comes to the castle and no man born of a woman can harm him. Macbeth interprets this riddle as a prophecy that he's infallible. However, Macbeth's Thanes turn away from him. Malcolm and Macduff conspire to topple Macbeth. Lady Macbeth dreams of not being able to wash the blood from her hands whilst sleepwalking naked. Malcolm attacks Macbeth's castle. Macduff challenges Macbeth to a fight, revealing that he wasn't born of a woman, but ripped out of his mother's womb. Macduff decapitates Macbeth and Malcolm is proclaimed the new King of Scotland.

Adapting Shakespeare "...safe in a ditch he bides, with twenty trenched gashes on his head, the least a death to nature..." (III, iv, 25-7). An obliging fidelity to Shakespeare texts poses a number of obstacles for film-makers. The results are either static, overblown and ultimately rather anonymous affairs (e.g. Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*, 1996) or replete with hollow irony (e.g. Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet*, 2000). Occasionally, a film-maker will remember film is about showing and not telling (e.g. Kosintsev's *Hamlet*, 1964). Zulawski recalls Wajda and Polanski studying Kurosawa's stunning Macbeth adaptation, *Throne Of Blood* (1957) on an editing deck back in the 1960s. However, Polanski's *Macbeth* is surprisingly literary, lacking any pictorial momentum, despite a large number of deeply unsettling images.

Throne of Blood The Polish literary critic Jan Kott argued that blood in *Macbeth* is not just a metaphor, for it stains the hands and faces of characters as well as their daggers and swords. Therefore, a production of *Macbeth* that doesn't evoke a bloody world would be false. Polanski's *Macbeth* isn't false. Polanski's pre-Medieval Scotland evokes the bloody passions of both Breughel and Bosch. Bodies are knifed, speared, decapitated, mutilated and hanged. Polanski was adamant that these effects were not facile shock effects. Rather, in order to film the story of a man who is beheaded, you have to show how his head is cut off. Polanski compared omitting violence to telling a dirty joke and leaving out the punch line. *Macbeth* is a violent play, and Polanski knew

only too well how violent life is. To not show violence is to be insincere, immoral – "If you don't upset people, then that's obscenity." In addition to his adaptation of Shakespeare's text, Polanski stages the Thane of Cawdor's execution, Duncan's murder and the climactic duel between Macbeth and Macduff. With regards to the latter sequence, Shakespeare merely has Macduff return to the stage with Macbeth's head on a pole. However, Polanski films Macbeth's being decapitated and his body collapsing down the staircase before closing with a shot of the decapitated head on a pole.

Female Nudity Female nudity is prominent in Polanski's adaptation, though its presentation isn't voyeuristic. From the outset, Polanski juxtaposes beauty with the grotesque. One witch is young and pretty whilst the other two are old and withered. Polanski associates his legions of witches with old age – the beautiful and grotesque aren't mutually exclusive, rather one becomes the other. Macbeth and his wife age as they become more and more consumed with murderous ambition. The image of the three witches of Cawdor and sleepy grooms is a homage to Salvador Dali's illustrated *Macbeth*. Needless to say, *Macbeth* being a Playboy Production, a fold-out spread of the witches coincided with the filmed release. Polanski also filmed an all-singing and dancing naked hag "Happy Birthday to Hugh" birthday card for Hefner.

Cathartic? The fact that Polanski filmed *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's most nihilistic play, in such a bloody manner, encouraged the idea that the project was a ' film exorcism' in the aftermath of the Manson murders. On the one hand, the murder of Lady Macduff and her children is poignant, and whilst Jon Finch's Macbeth does resemble Manson, it's doubtful Polanski would have filmed the play in a more restrained manner before the horrific events of his personal life.

Verdict Shakespeare's text and Polanski's apocalyptic visuals are ultimately dislocated in *Macbeth.* Tynan may have been the wrong choice to adapt the play for the screen. For Kurosawa, fidelity to the texts of *Macbeth* and *King Lear* is subordinate to capturing the spirit of the plays in *Throne Of Blood* and *Ran* (1985) respectively. Perhaps Polanski may have benefited from adopting a similar approach. The choice of The Third Ear Band to score the film was an inspired one, but the cranked-up climatic combat now seems faintly ridiculous. 3/5

According to Polanski, after *Macbeth* he "wanted to make another film at once, just to prove I still could." After the problems with sets, wigs, costumes and special effects, Polanski reacted completely against the technicalities of film-making and moved towards stark simplicity. Polanski and Tynan started work on an erotic screenplay in Saint-Tropez, employing neither clothes nor sets. Polanski wanted to make a feature using only nine ten-minute shots. The most famous example of this approach is Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948). As a formal device perfected and parodied by Miklos Jansco with *The Round-Up* (*Szegenylegenyek*, 1965; aka *The Hopeless Ones*), *The Red And The White* (*Csillagosok, Katonak*, 1967) and the exceptional *Red Psalm* (1972; aka *The Red Song*/*People Still Ask*). The Hungarian Bela Tarr, director of the epic *Satantango* (1997), is a contemporary director who uses monstrously long takes. Polanski may have been inspired by Skolimowski's formal, episodic narratives (e.g. *Walkover*, 1965) or interested in developing the form of *Cul-De-Sac*. His original idea was to devote one shot to an individual day of a man's erotic relationships. The man was to be based on the late Zbigniew Cybulski who had recently been killed whilst trying to catch a train. According to Tynan, Polanski "worshiped" Cybulski because of his intense sexuality and extreme lifestyle. The project faltered. According to Richard Gregory, Polanski then tried to interest some London financiers with the idea of a 3D horror film. Using the funds of the young French producer Jean-Pierre Rassam, Polanski made a series of 3D tests with the aim of applying the process to a "really spectacular erotic film."

What? was developed from a project intended for Jack Nicholson entitled *The Magic Finger*. The character of an eccentric millionaire was based on the oil magnate Calouste 'Mr Five Percent' Gulbenkian. Polanski and Brach concocted a Rabelaisian story about a flower child, wandering innocently around a testosterone heavy French Riviera. The character of Nancy had been conceived as a combination of Sade's Justine and *Playboy*'s Annie Fanny. Rassam dropped out, and Carlo Ponti put up the 1.2 million budget.

What?/Che? (1973)

Cast Sydne Rome (Nancy), Marcello Mastroianni (Alex), Hugh Griffith (Noblart), Romolo Valli (Giovanni), Guido Alberti (Priest), Gianfranco Piacentini (Tony), Roger Middleton (Jimmy), Roman Polanski (Mosquito).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Producer: Carlo Ponti; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach; Cinematography: Marcello Gatti, Giuseppe Ruzzolini; Music: Claudio Gizzi; Art Director: Franco Fumagalli; Sound: Piero Fondi; Editor: Alastair McIntyre; Production Design: Aurelio Crugnola. 113 mins.

Story A naïve young American give, Nancy, is hitch-hiking her way around Europe. After narrowly escaping gang-rape by some Italians who have given her a lift, armed only with a diary and some scant-clothing, she finds refuge in a palatial villa by the sea. The villa is inhabited by a bizarre collection of permanent as well as transient guests. The world of those who inhabit the villa and its private beach is far removed from any morality, let alone sanity that there might be in the outside world. Even time seems unimportant – the only clock in the villa is broken. Nancy sees paraded before her the full range of neurosis and sexual obsessions of people. Alex, a retired pimp oscillating between impotence and homosexuality, is inspired by Nancy to sadism and masochism. Dressed in tiger skin he makes her beat him and, dressed as a carabineri, he whips her. Among the strange guests who pass through the villa are homosexuals, art-dealers, some all-American tourists and a confused priest. The inhabitants of the villa are anticipating the death of its eccentric patriarchal owner, Noblart, Alex's uncle. Nancy excites the old-man and he collapses in bed. Granting his dying wish she reveals her nude body to him and he happily passes away. With the old man dead, Nancy decides that she must leave. Completely naked, she hitches a ride in a truckload of pigs to rejoin the outside world.

The Abuse of Sex Superficially a limp sex comedy, *What?* is nonetheless undercut with a profoundly cynical reduction of the abusive component of sexual relationships.

Victim and Victimiser Though Nancy starts whipping Alex, it's Alex who ends up whipping Nancy. As in *The Fat And The Lean*, *Mammals*

and *Cul-De-Sac*, Polanski conceives the existence of both victim and victimiser in a vicious circle. The narrative of *What?* is driven not by character, but by the momentum of ascension and submissions in Nancy's relations with the villa's various inhabitants.

Post-Manson Fairy Tale If *Macbeth* goaded allusions to the Manson murders through blood, *What?* is altogether more oblique in its grotesque presentation of Hippie dream turned nightmare. The various playboy and hippie caricatures are cynical, manipulative cranks solely intent on bedding Nancy. In terms of fairy-tale structure and negative post-hippie temperament (though admittedly little else), *What?* makes a curious parallel with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974). The preoccupations with S/M as well as the free-association plotting recall the comic strips of Guido Crepax, especially *Bianca*, which in turn draws heavily from *Repulsion*.

Mosquito Polanski makes a curious cameo in *What?* as Mosquito. He had been given the nickname at the Rio de Janeiro Film Festival because of "his size and irritating behaviour." However, the part isn't so much an in-joke as a disarmingly frank riposte to his public image. When Nancy talks of Alex in amateur psychoanalytic terms, alluding to childhood trauma, Mosquito replies that a difficult childhood is no excuse for being a pain in the ass.

Verdict The formlessness of *What?* is not so much Rabelaisian but more akin to the superficial plotting found in sexploitation films. *What?* wound up on the porn circuit, re-cut and with inserts on a double bill with *Eager Beavers*, retitled *Roman Polanski's Forbidden Dreams*. 2/5

6: Two For Paramount (1973-1975)

Chinatown (1974)

Cast Jack Nicholson (Jake J Gittes), Faye Dunaway (Evelyn Mulwray), John Huston (Noah Cross), Perry Lopez (Escobar), John Hillerman (Yelburton), Darrell Zwerling (Hollis Mulwray), Diane Ladd (Ida Sessions), Roy Jenson (Mulvihill), Roman Polanski (Man with Knife).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Producer: Robert Evans; Screenplay: Robert Towne; Cinematography: John A Alonzo; Music: Jerry Goldsmith; Sound: Robert Cornett; Editor: Sam O'Steen; Production Design: Richard Sylbert; Art Direction: Ruby Levitt; Costume Design: Anthea Sylbert; Associate Producer: C O Erickson. 131 mins.

Story Los Angeles, the 1930s. Jake Gittes is a private eye specialising in "matrimonial work," someone who will expose marital infidelities for a price. He is approached by Mrs Evelyn Mulwray to tail her husband, Hollis Mulwray, an engineer for the Water Department. Gittes photographs Mulwray in the company of a young blonde and concludes that the case is shut. However, much to his embarrassment Gittes discovers that he has been put up to the job and that the real Mrs Mulwray had nothing to do with hiring Gittes in the first place. When Hollis turns up dead, Gittes is drawn into further investigations, encountering a shady old people's home, corrupt bureaucrats, angry orange farmers whose livelihood is threatened by the plans of the Water Department and an impish thug in a pink suit who slices Gittes' nose for sniffing around. By the time Gittes confronts Cross, Evelyn's father and Mulwray's former business partner, he thinks he knows everything there is to know about the corruption that required Mulwray's silence, but he soon learns an even more unpleasant truth. Gittes had suspected Evelyn of kidnapping the girl he thought Hollis had been seeing only to learn that she is Evelyn's daughter. But when Gittes forces Evelyn to confess, he learns that the father of the girl isn't Hollis, but Evelyn's father. Gittes arranges for Evelyn and her daughter to escape from Cross, only to be stopped on his old beat in Chinatown. Evelyn is accidentally shot trying to escape, Cross ends up with custody of his daughter and Gittes is consoled with the words of an old colleague: "Forget it, Jake. It's Chinatown."

Critical Nostalgia Polanski's casting of John Huston, director of *The Maltese Falcon*, acknowledges the heritage of the film noir of the Thirties and Forties. The hardboiled detective genre had lain dormant since the late Fifties and *Chinatown* is one of several retooled films noirs made during the Seventies: Robert Altman's *Long Goodbye* (1973), Arthur Penn's *Night Moves* (1975) and Bob Raffleson's Mamet-scripted James M Cain revision *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1979). Whereas Altman dispenses with period fidelity and invests the genre with all the New Wave modernist trappings, Polanski and set designer Richard Sylbert recreated 1930s LA, and Towne's classically constructed script evoked the halcyon days of the studio system (hence the old-fashioned Paramount logo featured in the opening credits). The film reworked downbeat noir themes for the Seventies: a general pessimism and futility that was very much the Zeitgeist in post-JFK, post-Watergate, and post-Viet Nam America (hence the modern Paramount logo closing the film).

The Chinatown Metaphor At the time of its release, Polanski spoke of how he loved the 'clichés' yet *Chinatown* isn't a postmodern parody. Polanski certainly expresses nostalgia for the genre that sprang from the writings of Hammett and Chandler, but Polanski's pessimism and Towne's script result in a critical nostalgia. *Chinatown* thrives on this tension. Towne based his script on an actual scandal that hit Los Angeles in the early decades of the century, when rich men bought cheap farmland and had it incorporated into the city, thus acquiring control over the area's water supply. Towne's elaborate script is profoundly critical – in a Marxist sense – of America's past, using the period in a similar way in which Bertolucci charts the fascist uprising in his film of Alberto Moravia's novel, *The Conformist* (*La Conformista*, 1970). Gittes learns that by solving the mystery of Mulwray's death he's opened a social can of worms. Towne uses the *Chinatown* of the title as a metaphor for grandiose epic corruption and irrationality in American society. As earlier drafts of Towne's script testify, *Chinatown* wasn't intended to be so black, cynical, or defeatist – Evelyn and her daughter were allowed to escape to Mexico, for instance.

Given Polanski's own background in communist Poland, it's unlikely he was particularly interested in the politics implicit in Towne's script. Polanski's unaccredited final draft of *Chinatown* strips away any arm-

chair politicising in favour of a more pessimistic reading concerning the predominance of evil. In *Chinatown*, elected officials are the easily-purchased pawns of corrupt power brokers whose appetites know no check or balance (raging from greed to incest) and the closest thing we have to an honest and moral guide through this is a fallen private detective – a man whose career dictates that his loyalty can be purchased for a fee. Because Evelyn dies, Cross gets his daughter and Gittes is left helpless, that does not make Polanski amoral. Polanski's film *is* moral. It simply doesn't moralise openly as so many Hollywood films do.

Voyeurism Polanski streamlined Towne's script, emphasising the subjective nature of Gittes' work. As in *Blue Velvet* (1986), *Chinatown* correlates detection with voyeurism. Voyeurism is thus related to cinema: we see Hollis through the cross hairs of the camera lens, and others through window frames. Everyone is watching and being watched. In psychological terms, *Chinatown* is a case study of the 'sadistic gaze'. However, one nagging flaw or concession to audience expectation is the reflection of Hollis in Gittes' camera lens – he should appear to the viewer upside down.

Verdict Chinatown is very much a classic of 1970s Hollywood cinema. Robert Towne's Oscar-winning screenplay is generally regarded as the yardstick of traditional Hollywood narrative, thanks in no small part to the schematic teachings of Robert McKee. However, Polanski himself considers *Chinatown* a mere directing job done to reinvigorate his flagging critical reputation and renew his Hollywood credentials after *Macbeth* and *What?* Praise for *Chinatown* generally single out the producer, Robert Evans, for uniting and controlling a number of brilliant but often wayward talents. *Chinatown* deserves its reputation and can only be faulted for being a little too polished, thus losing some of the definition that characterises the sexual violence typical of Polanski's best work. 3/5

Roland Topor

Polanski's next film, *The Tenant*, was based on a novel by Roland Topor, *Le locataire chimérique*. Topor was born in Paris in 1938, the son of Polish Jewish refugees. He came to prominence in 1962 when he formed *Groupe Panique* with the Spanish playwright Fernando Arrabal, Chilean director Alejandro Jodorowsky and Jacques Sternberg. Polanski had known Topor for years, and Topor had suggested the project to him shortly after *Repulsion*. Polanski, however, had felt the subject was too close to that of the earlier film.

In 1975 Paramount had acquired the project and Polanski jumped at the opportunity of filming *Le locataire chimérique*. Polanski strongly identified with the novel's main character, Trelkovski, a paranoid alien in hostile Paris, and wanted to play him even if someone else directed. After coming to the West, Polanski had kept his Polish passport, but the inconvenience of obtaining visas had led him to apply for French citizenship.

Torpor was also a highly original artist. His perversely funny graphics were brought to a wider audience when he collaborated with René Lalou on the feature-length animation, *The Fantastic Planet* (*La planète sauvage*, 1973). Topor also acted in Makavejev's *Sweet Movie* (1974), Herzog's *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (*Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht*, 1979) and Schlondorff's *Swann In Love* (*Un amour de Swann*, 1984). Like Lenica, Topor also designed theatre and opera, especially productions of the absurd. He died of a brain haemorrhage in 1997.

The Tenant/Le locataire (1976)

Cast Roman Polanski (Trelkovski), Isabelle Adjani (Stella), Shelly Winters (Concierge), Melvyn Douglas (Monsieur Zy), Jo Van Fleet (Madame Dioz), Lila Kedrova (Madame Gaderian).

Crew: Director: Roman Polanski; Producer: Andrew Braunsberg; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach; Cinematography: Sven Nykvist; Music: Philippe Sarde; Sound: Michele Boehm; Editor: Françoise Bonnot; Production Design: Pierre Guffroy, Eric Simon; Art Direction: Claude Moeshing, Albert Rajau; Costume Design: Jacques Schmidt; Associate Producer: Alain Sarde; Executive Producer: Hercules Bellville. 126 mins.

Story Trelkovski, a Polish émigré, rents an apartment in a dingy Parisian residential building. The previous tenant, Simone Choule, lies in a coma after throwing herself out of the window. Whilst visiting the ex-tenant in hospital, Trelkovski meets Stella, Simone's girlfriend. Trelkovski's new neighbours are an assortment of old recluses and busybodies who generally eye the new tenant with suspicious contempt. Simone dies and Trelkovski obsesses over her belongings left in the apartment. After a panic attack during her funeral, Trelkovski grows increasingly paranoid about his neighbour's obsession with the slightest noise he makes in the apartment. He finds a tooth of Simone's hidden in the wall, notices that other tenants spend a curiously long time just staring out of the bathroom window across the courtyard opposite his flat. Trelkovski finds himself adopting Simone's tastes, clothes and even her girlfriend. Convinced that the other tenants are forcing him to commit suicide, Trelkovski goes out into the street in search of a gun with which to defend himself only to be run over by a car that may or may not have been driven by one of his neighbours. Even Stella turns out to be in on the 'plot'. Having awkwardly assumed the identity of Simone Choule, Trelkovski completes the act by throwing himself out of the window. Unsuccessful at first, he only succeeds in putting himself in a coma – like Simone – after a second attempt.

A Final Piece of Theatre Silvia Plath famously wrote about dying as an art. *The Tenant* begins and ends with a suicide, a very real act but which, nonetheless, is performed theatrically. *The Tenant* climaxes with a crane shot of Trelkovski, played by Polanski, in full drag to resemble Simone Choule, standing on the window ledge of his apartment. A drum roll accompanies a final pan around the courtyard revealing a literal audience composed of Trelkovski's (formerly Simone's) neighbours, lovers, as well as bystanders and strangers, sitting on rooftops and boxes awaiting the final act. This hallucination is one of many that puncture *The Tenant*.

Voyeurism All hallucinations in *The Tenant* involve an element of theatre. In one performance, Trelkovski watches the ghost of Simone Choule standing in the toilet adjacent to his apartment, unwrapping the bandages which cover the injuries incurred from her suicide attempt as if it were a striptease act. Another has a girl with a clubbed foot being taunted with sticks, her persecutors covering her face with a mask

resembling Trelkovski's. But most bizarre of all is a scene in which Trelkovski lies in bed suffering from a fever. He reaches out for a bottle of Perrier at his bedside, only to find that the bottle is, in fact, a cardboard cut-out. The staged qualities of the hallucinations consolidate the notion that suicide involves an internal splitting. When Trelkovski himself takes the place of the mummified body of Simone Choule in the toilet, he sees himself staring back across the courtyard. He has divided into a public self that exposes itself at the chosen moment of self-annihilation and a private self that hides (behind the camera?), directing his public act. Trelkovski's final performance demands visibility, though its purpose is to establish the ultimate privacy. Trelkovski is desperate to conceal himself and be left with a silence that has proved so elusive. As James Breslin wrote in his biography of the painter Mark Rothko, suicide is both an angry imposition and an angry withdrawal of the self.

Simone and I Lying drunk in bed with Stella, Trelkovski gets philosophical about his predicament, rambling on about an incident in which a man who had a limb amputated wanted to have it buried rather than cremated as the authorities requested. Trelkovski asks Stella at what precise moment does an individual cease to be the person he, and everyone else, believes himself to be? "I have an arm amputated, all right. I say: myself and my arm. If both of them are gone, I say: myself and my two arms. If it were my legs it would be the same thing...but if they cut off my head, what could I say then? Myself and my body, or myself and my head? By what right does the head, which isn't even a member like an arm or a leg, claim the title of 'myself'?" The most unpleasant hallucination in *The Tenant* involves Trelkovski, sitting in drag, staring out of the window as a ball is being bounced in the courtyard below. Suddenly the ball rises past the window in slow motion and resembles Trelkovski's decapitated head covered in a blonde wig.

Trelkovski into Simone The horror of *The Tenant* stems from an unbridgeable gulf between the elusiveness of the self and the sum of its representations. Trelkovski's identity is composed of his appearance, behaviour, preference and possessions. However, by the end of the film Trelkovski's identity has become that of the late Simone Choule. The staff at the local bar coerce Trelkovski into smoking Simone's Marlboro cigarettes and drinking chocolate instead of coffee. Thieves (or the other tenants?) steal his photographs, clothes and material possessions

leaving Trelkovski with only Simone Choule's clothes. He even shares with Simone the same object of desire, a frumpy Isabelle Adjani, and succumbs to the same obsession of Egyptology. The most disturbing aspect of the film is that by the end Trelkovski has vanished. What remains is merely a grotesque drag parody of Simone Choule. Trelkovski is completely alienated by the other tenants. Trelkovski has become Kosinski's proverbial "painted bird." Polanski himself used the term in describing how he felt as a Pole living in Paris despite having French citizenship. He said at the time of the release of *The Tenant* that in Paris he was always reminded of being a foreigner: "If you park your car wrong, it is not the fact that it's on the sidewalk that matters, but the fact that you speak with an accent."

The Verdict The Tenant was viciously attacked at Cannes but the film remains, for me, Polanski's masterpiece. Jerzy Skolimowski thought that despite all the humiliations, disappointments and compromises Polanski had had to endure over the years, *The Tenant* made it all worthwhile. However, Polanski himself is more critical of his achievement, regarding it merely as a flawed but nonetheless interesting experiment: "With hindsight, I realise that Trelkovski's insanity doesn't build gradually enough – that his hallucinations are too startling and unexpected. The picture labours under an unacceptable change of mood halfway through. Even sophisticated film-goers dislike a mixture of genres. A tragedy must remain a tragedy; a comedy that turns into a drama almost fails." However, some of the most interesting films of recent years lie at the intersection of two genres: *Performance* (Nicolas Roeg/Donald Cammell, 1969), *Possession* (Andrzej Zulawski, 1981), *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1985*), Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999). All of these films are, interestingly enough, like *The Tenant* in that they are dramas of 'self' and, unlike Polanski's earlier *Repulsion*, the shift from sanity to madness is catastrophic, not gradual. A pressure to stay faithful to genre boundaries reflects both an inability of genre models to adapt/evolve in response to developments in the film world and a lack of imagination on the part of both the film-maker and (more probably) the studio-marketing department. The only possible fault to be found in the film is a technical one (on the English version at least) – the sound mix seems a little flat, perhaps the result of a rushed post-production to meet the Cannes deadline? 5/5

7: In Search Of A Muse (1979-1988)

After the commercial and critical flop of *The Tenant*, Polanski reluctantly signed a deal with Columbia to direct an adaptation of Lawrence Sander's *The First Deadly Sin*. Also, Polanski accepted an assignment from *Vogue Hommes* to shoot a photo spread on beautiful young girls. Polanski had already photographed Nastassja Kinski in a Pirates themed spread for an issue of *Vogue* that he had guest-edited. However, whereas *Vogue* is about fashion, *Vogue Hommes* is about women. Henri Sera recommended the thirteen-year-old daughter of an old girlfriend as an ideal candidate for Polanski's spread. Polanski agreed and organised several photo shoots and on March 10, 1977, on Mullholland Drive, Los Angeles, Polanski became embroiled in another scandal.

The model's mother arranged for Polanski and her daughter to meet at a house Jack Nicholson rented from Marlon Brando, currently occupied by Anjelica Huston, Jack's girlfriend. Huston was absent and only the caretaker, Helena Kallianiotes, was present. Polanski found a case of champagne in the fridge, which he offered to the girl to relax her during the shoot. They both took some Quaaludes that they found in the bathroom and stripped off naked in Nicholson's jacuzzi. Polanski then had sex with the girl. Huston arrived and Polanski and the girl left. The girl called her seventeen-year-old boyfriend and told him about Polanski. Overhearing their conversation was the girl's elder sister, who in turn informed her mother. A medical examination was undertaken to establish whether the girl had had sexual contact, which was confirmed. Since the girl was under the age of consent, under Californian Law she was a victim of rape. Polanski was arrested the following day at the Beverley Wilshire Hotel under the supervision of District Attorneys James Grodin and David Wells. Polanski was found in possession of Quaaludes. On hearing the news, Columbia cancelled their deal with Polanski as director on *The First Deadly Sin*.

Polanski was taken to court on six indictments: i.) furnishing a controlled substance to a minor, ii.) committing a lewd and lascivious act on a child (i.e. oral sex) iii.) unlawful sexual intercourse, iv.) rape by use of drugs v.) perversion vi.) sodomy. If convicted, Polanski faced up to fifty years in jail. Superior Court Judge Laurence Rittenband was assigned to the case. A trial date was set for August 8 - the eighth anni-

versary of Tate's murder. Now, strapped for cash, Polanski signed a development deal with Dino De Laurentiis to write and direct a remake of John Ford's *Hurricane*, having recently turned down his offer to direct *King Kong*.

Polanski was permitted to travel abroad to scout for locations. Huston agreed to testify for the prosecution. However, on August 8 a plea bargain was arranged, Polanski was prepared to plead guilty to the charge of unlawful sexual intercourse. Before sentencing, Rittenband secured a team of psychiatrists to determine whether or not Polanski was "a mentally disordered sex offender." Irwin Gold compiled the probation report. Gold noted that although Polanski had endured abnormal stress throughout his life, he had not consulted psychiatric care as it could interfere with the creative process. On September 16 Rittenband planned to send Polanski to the State Facility in Chino for ninety days for a more extensive diagnosis but granted a ninety-day stay to allow Polanski to complete *Hurricane*.

Rittenband was vilified in the press when Polanski started courting 16-year-old Kinski and was photographed partying at the Munich Oktoberfest instead of working on *Hurricane*. Furious, Rittenband announced that he was going to send Polanski to jail immediately. On January 27, 1978, Polanski was released from prison after 42 days of psychiatric investigation. As Rittenband prepared to sentence him, on February 1, Polanski drove to Los Angeles airport and booked a flight to London and then to Paris, returning to an apartment he kept on Avenue Montaigne where he was safe from extradition under French law.

London lawyers advised Polanski that he could be extradited under English law, so his next film, *Tess*, was filmed in France.

Tess (1979)

Cast John Collin (John Durbeyfield), Nastassja Kinski (Tess), Peter Firth (Angel Clare), Leigh Lawson (Alec d'Urberville), Tony Church (Parson Tringham), Arielle Dombasle (Mercy Chant).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Producer: Claude Berri; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach, John Brownjohn, from the novel by Thomas Hardy; Cinematographers: Geoffrey Unsworth, Ghislain Cloquet; Music: Philippe Sarde; Editors: Alastair McIntyre, Tom Priestley; Production Design: Pierre Guffroy; Art Direction: Jack Stephens; Costume Design: Anthony Powell; Co-Producer: Timothy Burrill; Associate Producer: Jean-Pierre Rassam; Executive Producer: Pierre Grunstein. 170 mins.

Story Tess is a poor British peasant girl sent to live with her distant and wealthy relatives, the d'Urbervilles. Though Tess' father had hoped that the girl would be permitted a portion of the d'Urberville's riches, he is in for a major disappointment: Tess' new housemates are not the d'Urbervilles at all, but a group of social climbers who have bought the name. The girl is seduced/raped (it's all a little ambiguous due to a prudish fog making a timely descent). Tess becomes pregnant. Alec abandons her. Tess' baby dies in its infancy and Tess struggles to bury the child in the Church as it was never baptised. A humble farmer takes a shine to Tess and proposes to her. Tess accepts. Angel marries Tess only to spurn her when he learns of her past on their wedding night. Pride and bible bashing parents are to blame. Angel leaves to start a new life in a foreign country. Tess returns home, first to her family, then to Alec. Angel returns, searching all over Dorset for Tess. Finally Angel tracks Tess down on the coast where she is living with Alec. Angel begs for Tess' forgiveness but Tess refuses. However, Alec begins to wear Tess down, so she kills him (off screen). Tess is reunited with Angel at the last minute in melodramatic fashion at a train station. She tells Angel of her crime. Realising Tess' crime will result in her being hanged they head North. Angel and Tess soon run out of places to hide. The couple resort to spending the night at Stonehenge. However, the police finally catch up with them in the morning. A closing credit informs us that Tess was hanged for her crime.

Voyeurism Tess is beautiful. It's a pleasure to watch. But voyeurism underpins the formal structure of the film. Polanski composes *Tess* out of two distinct types of shots. Long formal static shots predominate, which are in turn cut with short, occasionally hand-held so-called 'subjective' camera shots using generally wider lenses. Tess herself is repeatedly composed in long static shots. If these long shots epitomise Polanski's obsession with looking, then point-of-view shots draw attention to characters looking. Whereas Alec and Angel have active gazes, Tess is objectified by Polanski's camera. One example is when Tess returns home after Angel's departure. Like Kwiatkowska (*When Angels Fall*) and Tate (*The Fearless Vampire Killers*), Polanski frames Kinski passively gazing at the camera through a window frame.

Rape Like *Rosemary's Baby*, the crux of the film lies in a scene in which we aren't sure what we've seen. When Alec gropes Tess on the field a fog quickly descends, obscuring the spectacle. It's not clear if Alec seduced or raped Tess. In fact, all acts of violence, including Alec's murder and Tess' eventual hanging, occur off screen. Alec's off-screen death is particularly grizzly: t he maid notices the blood dripping through the ceiling and Angel notices the blood stains around Tess' ankles.

Victim and Victimiser The rape/seduction is precipitated by a very explicit act of violence. Tess rebuffs Alec's advances, pushing him from the horse, banging his head on a rock. The scene is not in Hardy's original text, rather it is drawn from Polanski's own experience, first realised in *The Bicycle*. However, by masochistically exaggerating his role as victim, like the student in *Knife In The Water*, Alec coerces Tess to express her sorrow which he then takes advantage of. Once again, Polanski emphasises the reciprocal nature of victim and victimiser. However, like Borowczyk's *Story Of Sin* (*Dzieje Grzechu*, 1975), Christian society – both contemporary and Victorian – refuses to distinguish between the victim and victimiser. Nevertheless, Tess responds to her humiliation with dignity.

Pessimism Tess of the d'Urbervilles was first filmed ten years before Polanski's birth, in 1923. The film was released with a choice of two endings for exhibitors to choose from, one happy the other sad. Polanski's closure is closer to Hardy's original. His *Tess* is utterly devoid of romance, and it's the self-righteous Angel that comes across as more of

a monster than the weak-willed Alec. Even when Angel attempts to smuggle Tess out of the country, like Jake in *Chinatown*, his actions seem motivated more out of guilt and pity than love for Tess. Given the melodramatic content of Hardy's novel, Polanski's handling is remarkably restrained, almost austere, despite a rousing score by Philippe Sarde.

A Tragic Production The beauty of *Tess* can be attributed to four people: Polanski for his attention to detail, Pierre Guffroy for exceptional set design, and Geoffrey Unsworth and Ghislain Cloquet's cinematography. Unsworth was one of the greatest British cinematographers, lensing Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), Crichton's *The Great Train Robbery* (1977) and Donner's *Superman* (1978). Tragically, Unsworth had a heart attack during the production and died, leaving Cloquet with the unenviable task of completing the principle photography. Cloquet himself was an excellent cinematographer and *Tess* received Oscars® for Cinematography, Costume Design and Art Direction.

At one stage it seemed unlikely whether *Tess* would have a US release at all. The project was originally organised by Claude Berri's Renn Productions. Berri is a director/producer who has, over the last twenty-five years, produced a number of multimillion dollar French productions, including Patrice Chereau's *La Reine Margot* (1994). However, the sheer size of Polanski's film demanded a co-producer to share the costs. This was met by an English producer, Timothy Burrill. When it came to distributing *Tess* in the US, Francis Ford Coppola expressed interest in selling the film through his Zoetrope Studios. However, Coppola imposed a number of conditions: first the film should be completely re-cut making it a third shorter and considerably pacier; secondly, Coppola made the bizarre request that the film ought to start with Hardy's book being opened by hand and have a voice-over narrating the story.

Verdict Tess is not only a brilliant, perverse riposte to a public scandal that would have decimated the career of just about any other filmmaker, it is also an exceptional piece of craftsmanship. Alongside Kubrick's masterpiece, *Barry Lyndon* (1975), Polanski's *Tess* stands out as one of the finest mainstream period dramas of the Seventies. 4/5

Pirates (1986)

Cast Walter Matthau (Captain Red), Damien Thomas (Don Alfonso), Richard Pearson (Padre), Cris Campion (The Frog), Charlotte Lewis (Dolores), Olu Jacobs (Boumako), Roy Kinnear (Dutch), Ferdy Mayne (Captain Linares), Tony Peck (Spanish Officer).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Producer: Tarak Ben Ammar; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach, John Brownjohn; Cinematography: Witold Sobocinski; Music: Philippe Sarde; Editor: Hervé de Luze, William Reynolds; Production Design: Pino Butti; Co-Executive Producers: Mark Lombardo, Umberto Sambuco; Executive Producer: Thom Mount. 124 mins.

Story Having escaped from the island where they'd been stranded since a defeat at the battle of Boco del Toro, Captain Red and loyal Frog are floating in a raft in the middle of the ocean. Red lost a leg in the battle and is assumed to be dead. They spot a Spanish galleon, the Neptune. Red and Frog clamber on board the ship, only to be thrown into the brig. It is there that the duo run into Boumako, the ship's cook, accused of poisoning the captain who was actually killed by the 1st Lieutenant, Don Alfonso. However, what excites Red is the solid gold throne of Capatec Anahuac, the Aztec King, which he discovers while looking through a peephole in the wall. In a plot to get the throne, Red plans to start a m u tiny by putting a rat in the crew's soup. The crew turns against their oppressors. Frog falls in love with Dolores, the niece of the governor of Maracaibo. Red sails the Neptune to an old friend, Dutch. They throw a party, during which Don Alfonso and the officers of the Neptune escape. The Neptune is reclaimed and Red has lost both the ship and his treasure. Red and Frog buy a modest ship and sail to Maracaibo with a plan to steal the throne back. Disguised as a priest, Red forces the governor of Maracaibo to sign over the throne, holding Dolores as hostage. However, Red and Frog are captured by the Spanish whilst collecting the throne. Dolores visits Red and Frog in jail, bearing the bad news that the pair are both to be hanged for crimes against the Spanish government. Red's crew come to their rescue, breaking them out of jail and recapturing both the Neptune and the throne. The battle ends with Dolores choosing between her good life with Don Alfonso or joining Frog as a pirate. The film ends, as it opened, with both Red and Frog adrift on a raft.

Another Genre Spoof Polanski first attempted to get *Pirates* made immediately after *Chinatown*. The high-budget costume film was to star Jack Nicholson but Andrew Braunsberg had difficulty raising money for the film and Nicholson dropped out. Robert Shaw, who also starred in *Macbeth*, temporarily replaced him but also dropped out and the project faltered. When Polanski finally made the film in 1986 with Walter Matthau it was a disappointment, both to himself and the audience. As a genre spoof, *Pirates* is decidedly less successful than *The Fearless Vampire Killers*. The pirate genre has proved to be a remarkably difficult genre to parody, although *Pirates* is funnier than *Yellow Beard* (1983). Polanski can almost be forgiven for indulging in such a mess in the light of Renny Harlin's spectacularly dreadful, not to mention far costlier, *Cutthroat Island* (1996).

The Absurd Opening and closing on Frog and Red adrift on a raft, it seems Polanski intended to expand the playful energy evident in earlier shorts like *The Fat And The Lean* and *Mammals* to feature length.

Cannon A wealthy Tunisian, Tarak Ben Ammar, and the legendary Italian mogul Dino De Laurentiis produced *Pirates*. Originally *Pirates* was to have been distributed by MGM who had invested 10 million dollars in the 30 million dollar production. When they backed out, Ben Ammar negotiated, with the help of Crédit Lyonnais, to buy back the rights from MGM, although MGM retained some of their investment in *Pirates*. De Laurentiis' 15 million dollar stake gave him all foreign rights to the film. Ben Ammar approached Yoram Globus and Menahem Golan of Cannon films to distribute the film in the US and UK.

Unfortunately, Cannon scheduled *Pirates* to open the same day as James Cameron's *Aliens* (1986) and *Pirates*' opening weekend takings rank as one of the worst ever in motion picture history. *Pirates* only managed to recoup 1.5 million dollars in the whole of the US. As one production executive said (with the benefit of hindsight, it must be added): "People were talking bullshit, in telephone numbers, ridiculous images were being created in people's minds – and no one said 'STOP: This is fucking ludicrous.'"

The Verdict Whilst not particularly interesting in any sense, compared to what is generally considered acceptable as big-budget entertainment today, Polanski's *Pirates* is not that bad. Walter Matthau did not have the star power in the 1980s to carry such a large production

and opening against *Aliens* did not help. The best thing that can be said about *Pirates* is that it was an obsession brought to the screen at all cost and when it finally arrived, it was a decade too late. 1/5

Emmanuelle Seigner

Emmanuelle Seigner was the granddaughter of Louis Seigner, the legendary Comédie Française actor. Her father was a photographer, and her mother was an interior designer. At seventeen, Seigner started modelling before being cast by Jean-Luc Godard in *Detective* (1985). She met Polanski, thirty-five years her senior, in 1985. Polanski became Seigner's Svengali and developed her acting skills for a supporting role in his next project for Warner Brothers, *Frantic*.

Frantic (1988)

Cast Harrison Ford (Richard Walker), Betty Buckley (Sondra), Emmanuelle Seigner (Michelle), Gérard Klein (Gaillard), Patrice Melennec (Hotel Detective), David Huddleston (Peter), Alexandra Stewart (Edie), Robert Barr (Irwin), Raouf Ben Amor (Dr Metlaoui).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Producers: Tim Hampton, Thom Mount; Screenplay: Roman Polanski, Gérard Brach; Cinematography: Witold Sobocinski; Music: Ennio Morricone, Astor Piazzolla; Editor: Sam O'Steen; Production Design: Pierre Guffroy; Costume Design: Anthony Powell. 120 mins.

Story Richard Walker, an American doctor, and his wife Sondra arrive in Paris from San Francisco for a conference. While Walker is taking a shower, his wife leaves and does not return. It becomes apparent that they have picked up the wrong suitcase at the airport. Having looked around the hotel and the surrounding area, Walker finds her necklace in the gutter. It looks like she's been kidnapped. The police are uninterested and the American Embassy offers no help so Walker decides to make his own investigation. He tracks down the young Parisian dope smuggler, Michelle, who mistakenly picked up their suitcase. Things are made worse when they both realise that she is involved with Arab terrorists smuggling parts for a nuclear bomb. In the final showdown Walker gets Sondra back, the Arabs escape and Michelle is inadvertently shot dead.

Hitchcock Homage In terms of its beautifully simple premise and the effortless atmosphere of paranoia conjured up by Polanski, *Frantic* is a very efficient Hitchcock homage. Unfortunately, as the films of Brian DePalma or *What Lies Beneath* (2000) prove, Hitchcock homages aren't in short supply. *Frantic* is essentially a riff on *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) with the protagonist's wife kidnapped instead of his son. There are many general references to Hitchcock's work, for example, Walker's inadvertent coke-snorting ordeal in the bar recalls a drunk Cary Grant in *North By North West* (1959) trying to regain control of a car after his ordeal at Vandamm's residence.

Existential Angst The confusion at the airport is a chance mistake. The absence of Walker's wife taints the Paris locations. There's nothing abstract or intellectual about *Frantic*. Rather, the film is anxious, atmospheric and, frankly, rather depressing. The Eiffel Tower only appears as a tacky tourist gift used to conceal part of a nuclear bomb. Like the Paris depicted in *The Tenant*, the Parisian authorities are presented as indifferent, disinterested and entrenched in bureaucracy.

Verdict A good solid thriller, with a jazzy Morricone score. Harrison Ford does what he usually does, which is to fret in a macho kind of way. Emmanuelle Seigner is sexy, if not much else, whilst the Arabs are just ruthless. An air of anonymity hangs around *Frantic*. Don't expect anything out of the ordinary. Except, that is, for the downbeat ending. 2/5

8: Bitter End? (1992-2002)

Bitter Moon (1992)

Cast Hugh Grant (Nigel), Peter Coyote (Oscar), Emmanuelle Seigner (Mimi), Kristin Scott Thomas (Fiona), Victor Banerjee (Mr Sikh).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Producer: Robert Benmussa; Screenplay: Gérard Brach, John Brownjohn, Jeff Gross, Roman Polanski; Cinematographer: Tonino Delli Colli; Music: Vangelis; Editor: Hervé de Luze; Production Design: Willy Holt, Gérard Viard; Set Decoration: Philippe Turlure; Costume Design: Jackie Budin; Co-Producer: Alain Sarde; Executive Producer: Robert Benmussa. 139 mins.

Story Nigel and Fiona are celebrating their wedding anniversary when they encounter a bizarre couple on a cruise ship. Oscar is a gregarious, crippled American writer and his 'minder' is a voluptuous young French girl, Mimi. Nigel, a socially inept London banker, unsuccessfully tries to pick up Mimi. Oscar warns Nigel that she's dangerous. He invites Nigel to his cabin to tell him his story. Flashback to Paris: Oscar is obsessed by a bus ticket-dodging young girl. He finally runs into Mimi whilst on a date. She's a waitress with a passion for dance. Oscar details the increasingly perverse sexual relationship. Nigel tries to dismiss Oscar as a kinky old pervert, but he too is obsessed with Mimi and returns to hear the rest of Oscar's story. Oscar and Mimi unsuccessfully attempt to rejuvenate their relationship with sadomasochistic games, but it is only when Oscar grows tired of Mimi that the real power games begin. Whilst Mimi is still madly in love with Oscar, he can only get his kicks from humiliating her in public. Growing increasingly tired of Mimi, Oscar tricks her into boarding a plane for a tropical island with only a single ticket in her possession. Thinking he is now rid of Mimi, Oscar resumes his hedonistic lifestyle. However, Oscar is cut down when he's run over by a bus. Mimi suddenly appears at Oscar's hospital bedside. She tricks Oscar into overextending his injured back, leaving him paralysed. Mimi becomes Oscar's nurse. Now Oscar is the victim, trapped in his own flat and constantly being humiliated. The games of Oscar and Mimi put the relationship between Nigel and Fiona under increasing stress. Oscar coerces Nigel into seducing

Mimi but Fiona pulls the rug from under Nigel's feet by seducing her. Oscar blows his brains out with a pistol before killing Mimi.

Adult Fairy Tale Only the perverse fantasy can still save us, Goethe wrote. *Bitter Moon* certainly saved my interest in Polanski's films. *Bitter Moon* not only rekindles the kinkiness of *What?* but it also exhibits the originality of *Cul-De-Sac*. Loosely based on Pascal Bruckner's novel *Lune de Fiel*, *Bitter Moon*, like Leonard Schrader's *Naked Tango* (1989) and Donald Cammell's *Wild Side* (1995), employs the trappings of soft porn to fashion an excellent perverted black comedy about power. In an interview during his return to Poland in the late Seventies, Polanski assured an audience that normal love isn't interesting in cinema and that, if anything, it's completely boring. True to his words, *Bitter Moon* is a love story that is anything but normal. Featuring a seemingly respectable chap succumbing to latent sexual perversity, *Bitter Moon* is a particularly savage parable about the loss of innocence, a tradition encompassing such diverse films as Jerzy Skolimowski's *Deep End* (1970) and Lynch's *Blue Velvet*.

The Victim as Victimiser Oscar's sadomasochist fantasies are no fun because they are just that – fantasies. Oscar discovers there is no real *frisson* to be found in bondage, let alone pretending to be a pig. However, whilst Oscar plays the victim in the couple's fantasy games, Mimi's masochistic love for Oscar renders her open to cruel abuse. Like Andrzej in *Knife In The Water* and Jake in *Chinatown*, the fox is soon outfoxed and foxed once again. Just as Oscar's disappearing act on an international flight leads him to think that he is now rid of Mimi, Mimi upon her return tricks Oscar into paralysing himself whilst lying in his own hospital bed. And just as Nigel goes about deceiving Fiona, he too gets his come-uppance when Mimi succumbs to Fiona's advances under the passive gaze of a shocked Nigel and a cynical Oscar.

Flashback Structure Interestingly, *Bitter Moon* employs a similar flashback structure to Polanski's student short, *Where Angels Fall*. The form allows a number of structured, reflective and finally pessimistic scenes that permit a wider drama to be recounted from the past whilst retaining the claustrophobic tension of the cruise liner framing the present drama.

Grotesque Humour With *Bitter Moon*, Polanski is at his most vulgar. To the strains of an overwrought Vangelis soundtrack Polanski juxta-

poses nauseating romantic cliché s (e.g. holding hands on fairground swings) with near pornographic sex scenes. Highlights include Mimi dribbling a mouthful of full fat milk over her breasts in front of Oscar at the breakfast table whilst George Michael's 'Faith' plays on the radio and Oscar accidentally strangling a call girl's poodle whilst he's having a blow job.

Cruelty Despite its reputation, the most shocking aspects of *Bitter Moon* are not the sex scenes. Real violence occurs in *Bitter Moon* in the abrupt, almost mundane treatment of Oscar being knocked over by a bus. Conversely, the most uncomfortable sequences in *Bitter Moon* involve Mimi allowing Oscar to wet himself in his wheelchair and her deliberately slack use of hypodermics.

Verdict Bitter Moon is very black, utterly vulgar, thoroughly cruel and one of the most undervalued films of the Nineties. 4/5

Death And The Maiden (1994)

Cast Sigourney Weaver (Paulina Escobar), Stuart Wilson II (Gerardo Escobar), Ben Kingsley (Dr Roberto Miranda).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Producers: Josh Kramer, Thom Mount; Screenplay: Ariel Dorfman, Rafael Yglesias, based on the play by Ariel Dorfman; Cinematography: Tonino Delli Colli; Music: Wojciech Kilar; Editor: Hervé de Luze; Production Design: Pierre Guffroy; Art Direction: Claude Moesching; Costume Design: Milena Canonero; Co-Producers: Ariel Dorfman, Bonnie Timmermann; Associate Producer: Gladys Nederlander; Executive Producers: Jane Barclay, Sharon Harel. 103 mins.

Story In an anonymous, recently democratised South American country, Gerardo Escobar, a lawyer who has recently landed a job that involves bringing criminals of the old regime to justice, is driving home to a secluded house which he shares with his wife, Paulina. A tyre blows out of Gerardo's car. However, upon replacing the wheel, Gerardo discovers that his spare is flat too. Luckily another driver offers his spare tyre to Gerardo. Gerardo thanks the good Samaritan, a Doctor, and returns home. However, the doctor returns to Gerardo's house under the pretence of retrieving his tyre, though his real motive is to express his gratitude for Gerardo's work in bringing the crimes of the

old regime to justice. Meanwhile Paulina, upon hearing the doctor's voice, becomes terrified. She drives off in the doctor's car, confiscates a tape of Schubert's *Death And The Maiden* before toppling the car over a cliff. She returns to the house, gags the doctor and binds him to a chair threatening him at gunpoint. Paulina cannot believe her luck: as a student activist under the old regime, unbeknown to Gerardo, she was blindfolded, electrocuted by her interrogators and subsequently raped repeatedly by a doctor installed to ensure her medical well-being. The doctor violently denies any such involvement in any such crime, protesting to having been in residence at a hospital in Spain during the period of Paulina's ordeal in the late Seventies. Gerardo initially thinks Paulina has gone mad, but starts to believe her when she mentions that the doctor was fond of quoting Nietzsche, something he had experience of whilst conversing with the doctor earlier. Though originally intent on killing t he doctor, Paulina settles for a mock trial, where Gerardo ends up defending the doctor, thus stretching his relationship with Paulina to breaking point. Gerardo is caught in the middle of Paulina and the doctor and right up until the end is still not sure that Paulina has the right man. At a cliff top the doctor confesses to his crimes and each party wanders off in a catatonic state.

Just Another Power Play? For *Death And The Maiden*, Polanski employs a whole range of stylistic and plot devices from his repertoire to the point where the film should be self-parody. However, despite the claustrophobic settings, the isolated drama, a violent power play between a victim of sexual abuse, a monster who has managed to hide himself within reformed society and a largely impotent husband, *Death And The Maiden* feels distinctly unlike any other Polanski film. Polanski's handling of the drama can't be faulted. Technically, set design and photography are efficient, if undistinguished. However, what jars are the roots in Dorfman's stage play.

Polanski's drama is hampered by the preachy, po-faced, overly liberal tone of Dorfman's simplistic play that essentially contrasts instinctive emotion with cerebral democratic beliefs. Maybe because of the knowledge that Dorfman's play was based on real political terror tactics used in South America, what *Death And The Maiden* offers is a crossing-out of the perversities so evident in, for example, *Bitter Moon*.

Ironically, the central image of *Death And The Maiden*, that of the doctor gagged and bound to a chair whilst Paulina threatens him almost sensually with a gun, is remarkably similar to Oscar's sadomasochistic fantasy in *Bitter Moon*. The difference here is that in *Bitter Moon* it was Oscar's fantasy, whereas the implicit rape of Paulina in *Death And The Maiden* is very real, and therefore, instantly condemnable. The disturbing element of Dorfman's piece is how a doctor, someone whose job it is to care for people, succumbs to playing a role in the torture and abuse of political prisoners. However, Dorfman deals with the issue in a simplistic polarised state of good and bad. This is completely at odds with the rest of Polanski's work. Polanski has always explored the relationship between victim and victimiser and the very real issue of how victims are disturbingly associated with the crimes committed against them.

In fact Liliana Caviani's *Night Porter* (the best film Polanski never made?) is not only more disturbing in its exploration of a similar theme but is also much more convincing. Caviani's film involves a Jewish woman checking into a classy hotel after the war only to find her Nazi interrogator working as a night porter. Unlike Dorfman's play, and more typical of a Polanski drama, rather than enact revenge, the pair resume the sadomasochistic relationship they first played out in the camps. Caviani's story does sound exploitative and sensationalist compared to Dorfman's play but was actually developed from a series of interviews with Holocaust captives for an Italian television documentary.

Verdict An efficient, entertaining and atmospheric drama marred by preachy source material and cramped slightly by stagy (though admittedly impressive) performances. 2/5

Polanski's next project was to be based on an original screenplay by Gérard Brach and himself, *The Double*. Early publicity suggested the project was to be a William Wilson style drama of a man haunted by his doppelgänger. John Travolta, fresh from *Pulp Fiction* (1994), was secured for the leading role and Isabelle Adjani was to play a supporting role in the Paris-based production. As *The Double* entered its first week of production in 1996, Travolta and Polanski had an argument that resulting in Travolta walking off the set. The production continued without him until finally Adjani also quit, which led to the production

being closed down. Eager to make another film as quickly as possible, Polanski turned to Arturo Pérez-Reverte's *Il Club Dumas*. Johnny Depp, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Pérez-Reverte in the film, was cast in the lead role. Filming took place in Portugal, Spain and France in 1998.

The Ninth Gate/La neuvième porte (1999)

Cast Johnny Depp (Dean Corso), Lena Olin (Liana Telfer), Frank Langella (Boris Balkan), James Russo (Bernie), Jack Taylor (Victor Fargas), Barbara Jefford (Baroness Kessler), Emmanuelle Seigner (The Girl).

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Producer: Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Enrique Urbizu, John Brownjohn, Roman Polanski, based on the novel *Il Club Dumas* by Arturo Pérez-Reverte; Cinematography: Darius Khondji; Music: Wojciech Kilar; Production Design: Dean Tavoularis; Art Direction: Gérard Viard; Set Decoration : Philippe Turlure; Costume Design: Anthony Powell; Co-Producers: Mark Allan, Antonio Cardenal, Iñaki Núñez, Alain Vannier; Associate Producer: Adam Kempton; Executive Producers: Michel Cheyko, Wolfgang Glattes. 133 mins.

Story Dean Corso, a Manhattan rare book dealer, is hired by Boris Balkan, a wealthy collector with an unhealthy interest in the Devil, to compare his copy of the *Nine Gates To The Kingdom of Shadows* with the only two copies that remain in existence. For this Corso has to travel to Portugal and France. The book, reputedly a transcription of a tome written in part by the Devil himself, contains a set of engravings hiding the key to the kingdom of shadows. Balkan had acquired his copy of the *Nine Gates* from the late Telfer, whose seductive widow, Liana, uses her charms on Corso to try and get the copy back. In Portugal Corso notices some discrepancies in two of the three copies of the *Nine Gates*. Shortly after, Corso finds the owner of the second copy dead and the engravings stolen from his copy of the *Nine Gates*. Corso suspects a mysterious grungy blonde-haired girl who has been following him.

In Paris, Corso encounters Baroness Kessler, a wheelchair bound authority on the Devil. Initially reluctant to co-operate because of Balkan financing Corso's investigations, she reveals that Liana Telfer is the head of a Satanic sect which converge annually to read from the *Nine*

Gates, thus explaining why she's so keen to get her copy back. Corso is knocked out cold whilst researching in Kessler's archive, finds his host strangled and her apartment on fire. As before, the engravings have been stolen from her copy of the *Nine Gates*. Soon after, Liana steals Corso's copy from his swanky five-star hotel. Balkan threatens to kill Corso if he doesn't retrieve his copy of the *Nine Gates* immediately. Corso and the mysterious girl trace Liana to a Château on the outskirts of Paris. Having infiltrated Liana's Black Mass, Balkan makes a grand entrance, denouncing Liana's rituals as mumbo-jumbo, before garrotting her and stealing his copy back. The climax takes place in a castle where Balkan accidentally immolates himself whilst attempting to summon the Devil. After making love to Corso, the girl leaves him with a note directing him back to Toledo. Corso discovers that the ninth engraving of Balkan's copy is, in fact, fake. Now with a full set of engravings, Corso enters the Ninth Gate.

Book Fetishism Above all else, *The Ninth Gate* is a thriller involving bibliophiles, fanatical collectors of what seem destined to be relics of the second millennium. *The Ninth Gate* is also a film about books. Polanski takes great pleasure in emphasising the tactile quality of these coveted as well as perishable items. He invests an almost sensual attention to detail: forgeries are detected by the sound of the paper, the bindings of the books are smelled, imperfections of the ink press are noted and recorded. Like Dario Argento's occult book horror story, *Inferno* (1980), Polanski invests an almost fetishistic interest in the three copies of *The Nine Gates*. Eccentric book dealers drop cigarette ash on the covers, pages become progressively stained with scotch whilst readers puzzle over their secrets. Engravings are torn out, hidden on top of bookcases, the missing pages only to be replaced by painstaking forgeries. The ephemeral signifiers of the digital age – mobile phones, television, the internet – are all conspicuously absent.

A Reaction If *The Ninth Gate* is reactionary in spirit, Polanski's execution also harks back to a cinema of the past. Through a disciplined use of steadicam and relatively wide-angle lenses, *The Ninth Gate* unfolds through a procession of simple though judicious takes. As a story of a "book detective," to use Liana's description, *The Ninth Gate* is closest in style to *Chinatown*. Robert Towne recently spoke of how he thought that it would be impossible to produce *Chinatown* today

because of its pace, style and the degree of patience it demands from an audience. The lukewarm commercial response to *The Ninth Gate* adds weight to Towne's assumption, which is a little depressing. Although lacking the breakneck editing and wall-to-wall music, there is form, pattern and a definite structure to *The Ninth Gate*. The film feels pleasantly stranded somewhere between the Fifties and Nineties. The casting recalls, consciously or not, genres of the Sixties and Seventies – Hammer veteran Barbara Jefford plays the eccentric Baroness Kessler whilst Jack Taylor summons up an entire legion of Jess Franco films and sundry other Spanish horrors.

Parallels With Kubrick's Eyes Wide Shut A curious parallel can be drawn between *The Ninth Gate* and another film that made no attempt to hide its roots in the past, *Eyes Wide Shut*. Stanley Kubrick's last film was released almost simultaneously with Polanski's in Europe. In what must be a bizarre coincidence, both self-imposed exiles reconstructed sections of Manhattan in their adopted homes of France and England for two films that reached their high point of sorts with cloaked orgies in secluded mansions.

The Devil Again After *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Ninth Gate* is Polanski's second film concerning the Devil. However, unlike *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Ninth Gate* received a rather unsympathetic critical and commercial reception upon its release in 1999. Sadly, this verdict is more indicative of the inability of a marketing department to recognise and champion the qualities of the film. *The Ninth Gate* doesn't fit neatly into any one genre. It reflects badly on a critical community that is becoming more conservative in taste though ultimately less demanding. The most sympathetic British review of *The Ninth Gate* came from an unlikely source, Gilbert Adair.

Verdict The Ninth Gate is an intelligent, exciting and resoundingly unpretentious drama. Beautifully photographed by Darius Khondji and gracefully scored by Wojciech Kilar, *The Ninth Gate* has a sophisticated yet playful menace, reminiscent of Hitchcock, though one only hopes that for this film Polanski put his real demons on hold rather than losing them entirely. 3/5

The Pianist/*Der Pianist* (2002)

Cast Adrien Brody, Thomas Kretschmann, Ed Stoppard, Emilia Fox, Frank Finlay, Julia Rayner, Jessica Kate Meyer, Maureen Lipman.

Crew Director: Roman Polanski; Screenplay: Ronald Harwood, Roman Polanski, based on the book by Wladyslaw Szpilman; Cinematography: Pawel Edelman; Music: Wojciech Kilar; Production Design: Allan Starski; Set Decoration: Gabriele Wolff; Costume Design: Anna B Sheppard.

Whatever there is to make of Polanski's assertion that *The Pianist* is the most important film of his life, it does constitute his first film to deal explicitly with the Polish experience of the Second World War. Polanski had already turned down Steven Spielberg's offer to direct *Schindler's List* in 1993. This is all the more remarkable given Polanski's tendency to both recreate, control and ultimately theatricalise events in his own personal life. As Barbara Leaming suggests in her biography of Polanski, his films are keyed into the viewer's consciousness of the Polanski persona: a life inflected by sex and violence. During the 1970s, especially around the time of *Tess*, Polanski mastered his own image in the press, in turn using it as material for his films. However, given the erratic critical and commercial success of Polanski's films during the last two decades, the question is just how much a presence is Polanski in the viewer's consciousness? Will the fact that he himself endured years in the Cracow ghetto have any bearing on how we perceive *The Pianist*?

Polanski has been reluctant to make a film based on his own experiences, suggesting that he probably would not be capable of producing such a work. However, by filming Wladyslaw Szpilman's novel, Polanski has found a model that, whilst detached from his own experience, nonetheless exhibits parallels with his own life. According to Ronald Harwood, who adapted the book with Polanski, the director's emotional experiences in the Cracow ghetto during his formative years appear in every scene, guaranteeing the film's authenticity and realism.

Wladyslaw Szpilman's Memoirs Szpilman's book was first published in Poland in 1946 under the title *Death Of A City.* It was also published in German under the title *Das wunderbare überleben [The Miraculous Survival]* and was reissued two years ago, just one year before the noted

pianist died. Szpilman was the only one of his family to survive the Holocaust. However, back in 1946 *The Pianist* was almost immediately withdrawn from circulation by the Polish authorities now under the puppet rule of Stalin. Wolf Biermann argues that Szpilman's book contained too many truths about the collaboration of defeated Russian, Poles, Ukrainians, Latvians and Jews with the German Nazis. Even in Israel people did not want to hear about such things. The subject was intolerable to all concerned, victims and perpetrators alike, although for opposite reasons.

As Polanski must know only too well, Anti-Semitism was flourishing in Poland long before the German invasion. However, three to four hundred thousand Poles risked their lives to save Jews. If you hid a Jew in France, the penalty was prison or a concentration camp, in Germany it cost you your life – but in Poland it cost the lives of your entire family.

Szpilman's story tells of his part in the Jewish resistance. Szpilman was among those who were taken out daily in labour columns to the Aryan side of the city, smuggling food and ammunition for the Jewish resistance, similar to Polanski's experiences in the Cracow ghetto.

Szpilman would probably have not survived if it were not for a Wehrmacht officer, Wilm Hosenfeld. Hosenfeld was a teacher who had already served in the First World War and was considered too old for service in the front line. Hosenfeld found the half-dead pianist in the ashes of Warsaw. Instead of killing Szpilman, Hosenfeld brought him food, found him a coat to wear and a quilt. There is something perverse about Polanski making a film of the Shoah that has the form of a Hollywood fairy tale, yet it is nonetheless a true story. Knowing the Germans had now lost the War, Szpilman gave Hosenfeld some information in return. "If anything happens to you, if I can help you in any way, remember my name: Szpilman, Polish Radio." Szpilman tried unsuccessfully to locate his saviour after the war but Hosenfeld had been taken prisoner by the Soviet army and died in captivity at Stalingrad seven years later. In a cruel twist, for having the nerve to claim that he'd saved a Jew, Hosenfeld was tortured by Soviet officers.

Szpilman resumed his work for Radio Warsaw as a pianist. He opened the broadcasting service after the war with Chopin's *Nocturne In C Minor* that he had been playing live on radio during the invasion.

Polanski heard Szpilman play a concert in Warsaw a decade ago without being aware of the musician's past.

Back to Poland Originally Polanski had planned to shoot *The Pianist* entirely in Poland, making it the first film he had shot in his native country since *Knife In The Water* almost forty years earlier. However, Polanski was unable to find suitable locations and sufficient studio capacity for the large production. *The Pianist* was the third big-budget production to be shot at Berlin's Studio Babelsberg (the others were Jean-Jacques Annaud's Leningrad epic *Enemy At The Gates* (2000) and István Szabó's own Shoah epic *Taking Sides* (2000)). The film was shot over five weeks in the spring of 2001, followed by eleven weeks of location shooting in Warsaw.

The Production Ronald Harwood adapted Szpilman's book for the screen with Polanski. It was not unfamiliar ground for Harwood, who had written the screenplay for Szabó's *Taking Sides*, which was based on Berlin Philharmonic director Kurt Furtwaengler's relations with the Nazis and his efforts to save the lives of his Jewish musicians. Polanski's technical crew was a mixture of Polish and international talents, including cinematographer Pawel Edelman (whose photography for Andrzej Wajda's turgid *Pan Tadeusz* was probably the film's strongest asset), a score by Wojciech Kilar, set design by Allan Starski and costume design by Anna Sheppard. Both Starski and Sheppard were highly acclaimed for creating the look of Spielberg's Holocaust epic, *Schindler's List*. Thirty years after the demise of Cadre Films, Gene Gutowski returned to work with Polanski, this time acting as co-producer, backed up by Robert Benmussa and A lain Sarde who had collaborated with Polanski on *Bitter Moon*.

Polanski originally intended to cast an unknown actor for the part of Szpilman, though despite selecting thirty hopefuls for screen tests out of the thousands who had responded to an advert in the *Guardian*, he finally decided on a professional actor, Adrien Brody, who had starred in Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line* (1999). Brody had taken piano lessons as a child from his mother and practised diligently in preparation for his role. Thomas Kretschmann (*Il Sindrome di Stendhal*, 1996) plays Hosenfeld.

The success or failure of *The Pianist* will be crucial to Polanski's place in film history. While Polanski has demonstrated a remarkable

versatility when it comes to working in foreign countries and different genres, this may lead to the neglecting of his films since film histories tend to be organised around either nationality or genre. Polanski's idiosyncratic vision may endure, though it could equally be neglected as a product of its time. Either way, Polanski's films will continue to act as bitter antidotes to the usual saccharine fare of conventional Hollywood cinema.

9: Bibliography And Resources

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Videos

This is a list of English language Polanski videos in the VHS/PAL format which are currently available or have been recently deleted. The titles marked with an asterisk (*) have also been released on DVD.

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More than 20 years after his death, Alfred Hitchcock is still a household name, most people in the Western world have seen at least one of his films, and he popularised the action movie format we see every week on the cinema screen. He was both a great artist and dynamite at the box office. This book examines the genius and enduring popularity of one of the most influential figures in the history of the cinema!

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The popular myth is that after the artistic success of *Citizen Kane* it all went downhill for Orson Welles, that he was some kind of fallen genius. Yet, despite overwhelming odds, he went on to make great Films Noirs like *The Lady From Shanghai* and *Touch Of Evil*. He translated Shakespeare's work into films with heart and soul (*Othello*, *Chimes At Midnight*, *Macbeth*), and he gave voice to bitterness, regret and desperation in *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *The Trial*. Far from being down and out, Welles became one of the first cutting-edge independent film-makers.

Woody Allen (Revised & Updated Edition) by Martin Fitzgerald, £3.99

Woody Allen: Neurotic. Jewish. Funny. Inept. Loser. A man with problems. Or so you would think from the characters he plays in his movies. But hold on. Allen has written and directed 30 films. He may be a funny man, but he is also one of the most serious American film-makers of his generation. This revised and updated edition includes *Sweet And Lowdown* and *Small Time Crooks*.

Film Noir by Paul Duncan, £3.99

The laconic private eye, the corrupt cop, the heist that goes wrong, the femme fatale with the rich husband and the dim lover - these are the trademark characters of Film Noir. This book charts the progression of the Noir style as a vehicle for film-makers who wanted to record the darkness at the heart of American society as it emerged from World War to the Cold War. As well as an introduction explaining the origins of Film Noir, seven films are examined in detail and an exhaustive list of over 500 Films Noirs are listed.

Noir Fiction by Paul Duncan, £2.99

For every light that shines, there must always fall a shadow, a dark side - Noir. Noir has infiltrated our world, like some insidious disease, and we cannot get rid of it. The threads of its growth and development have been hinted at but no-one has yet tried to bind them together, to weave the whole picture. This book takes you down the dark highways of the Noir experience, and examines the history of Noir in literature, art, film, and pulps. Sensitive readers are warned - you may find the Noir world disturbing, terrifying and ultimately pessimistic. Features: Jim Thompson, Cornell Woolrich, David Goodis, James Ellroy, Derek Raymond, Charles Willeford and more.

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Stanley Kubrick (Revised & Updated Edition) by Paul Duncan, £3.99

Kubrick's work, like all masterpieces, has a timeless quality. His vision is so complete, the detail so meticulous, that you believe you are in a three-dimensional space displayed on a two-dimensional screen. He was commercially successful because he embraced traditional genres like War (*Paths Of Glory*, *Full Metal Jacket*), Crime (*The Killing*), Science Fiction (*2001*), Horror (*The Shining*) and Love (*Barry Lyndon*). At the same time, he stretched the boundaries of film with controversial themes: underage sex (*Lolita*); ultra violence (*A Clockwork Orange*); and erotica (*Eyes Wide Shut*).

Tim Burton by Colin Odell & Michelle Le Blanc, £3.99

Tim Burton makes films about outsiders on the periphery of society. His heroes are psychologically scarred, perpetually naive and childlike, misunderstood or unintentionally disruptive. They upset convential society and morality. Even his villains are rarely without merit - circumstance blurs the divide between moral fortitude and personal action. But most of all, his films have an aura of the fairytale, the fantastical and the magical.

French New Wave by Chris Wiegand, £3.99

The directors of the French New Wave were the original film geeks - a collection of celluloid-crazed cinéphiles with a background in film criticism and a love for American auteurs. Having spent countless hours slumped in Parisian cinémathèques, they armed themselves with handheld cameras, rejected conventions, and successfully moved movies out of the studios and on to the streets at the end of the 1950s.

Borrowing liberally from the varied traditions of film noir, musicals and science fiction, they released a string of innovative and influential pictures, including the classics *Jules Et Jim* and *A Bout De Souffle*. By the mid-1960s, the likes of Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, Louis Malle, Eric Rohmer and Alain Resnais had changed the rules of film-making forever.

Mike Hodges by Mark Adams, £3.99

Features an extensive interview with Mike Hodges. His first film, *Get Carter*, has achieved cult status (recently voted the best British film ever in *Hotdog* magazine) and continues to be the benchmark by which every British crime film is measured. His latest film, *Croupier*, was such a hit in the US that is was re-issued in the UK. His work includes crime drama (*Pulp*), science-fiction (*Flash Gordon* and *The Terminal Man*), comedy (*Morons From Outer Space*) and watchable oddities such as *A Prayer For The Dying* and *Black Rainbow*. Mike Hodges is one of the great maverick British filmmakers.

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